

WEEK 25, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 12-20

OVERVIEW:

The preservation of God's Word; longing for deliverance; the foolishness of fools; the description of a godly man; the second coming of Christ; the power of God's Word.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Verse 1 of Psalm 12 establishes the theme and sets the context for the entire psalm: namely, that godly and faithful men are in short supply! It was true in David's day—and it is certainly descriptive of our day as well. However, the Lord promises He will arise—and that justice toward the proud and blasphemous "talkers" in this world (12:2–4), along with the oppressors of the poor and needy will be served! (12:5) The certainty of this truth is based on the certainty of God's Word. We can rest and be at peace even in this evil world, because we trust the promises of God's Word. He has preserved it for us! It is true—and we can rest assured that the Lord will keep His Word. In fact, 12:6–7 promises that He will preserve and keep His Word pure forever! Hallelujah!

If you're in need of encouragement today, you may want to slow down through Psalm 13. It only has six verses, so it's a quick read—but boy, do they pack a wallop!

Notice how honest David gets with God in this psalm. Isn't it awesome that our God can not only handle our honesty—but that He actually welcomes it?! (Heb. 4:14–16) As David is writing and singing this song (psalm) to the Lord, he is a discouraged, disappointed and even a disillusioned man. In fact, in the first two verses, he asks God four rather inflammatory questions! Each begin with the same two words: "How long?"

- HOW LONG wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?
- HOW LONG wilt thou hide thy face from me?
- HOW LONG shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?
- HOW LONG shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

Have you ever found yourself at a place spiritually where you've felt what the psalmist was feeling here? Have you ever opened your heart to the Lord in prayer and found your mouth crying out, "How long, O Lord?" Notice that as David continues to work through his questions (and questioning!) of God in this psalm, that by the time his song is over, he's been brought into remembrance of God's mercy, His salvation, and just how bountifully God had dealt with him through the years.

As we immerse ourselves into this psalm today, may we, likewise, find with David, that if we will simply and honestly pour out our hearts to God—and yes, even our frustrations—that God will begin to bring to our minds—His mercies toward us... the salvation He's provided us... and the bountiful goodness He's shown us through the years. No, our

circumstances may not immediately change (David's didn't!), but maybe what will change will be our attitude and outlook toward them! May Psalm 13 be of great comfort to all of us today!

Psalm 14 is a description of lost man. May we keep ever-present in our hearts and minds that this psalm was descriptive of each of us before coming to Christ!

In Psalm 15, God contrasts the description of the lost man with His description of a "godly," or "saved" man—or, someone in whom God dwells. God uses five sentences to provide a composite of this person:

1. He possesses inward righteousness that works its way outward into daily living. (15:2)
This is the exact opposite of the Pharisees who had an outward "righteousness," but inwardly were full of unrighteousness.
2. He loves others as he loves himself. (15:3)
Note that interpersonal problems in our relationships are caused because someone is not loving his neighbor as himself! (Gal. 5:14–15)
3. He honors those whose lives give evidence that they fear God, not those who live vile lives. (15:4a)
Who are the people you respect and admire? Are they people who walk with God?
4. He is someone who means what he says. (15:4b)
Can others always trust the things that come out of your mouth? Do you keep your word even when it costs you something, or inconveniences you?
5. He is not driven by financial gain. (15:5)
Is the priority and pursuit of your life all about making money, getting ahead, becoming "well off"—or, is it loving God, and advancing His kingdom and glory?

Note the prophecy concerning Christ's death and resurrection in Psalm 16:10. Peter was well-aware of this prophecy, even referencing it in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:31!

Psalm 17 is a great place to find refuge during times of trial—particularly those times when people are callously heaping upon you intense opposition. Find solace and comfort through the outpouring of David's heart—and his absolute dependence upon God, not only to see him through it—but to conform him into His image in the process! (17:15 c.f. Rom. 8:29) May we both learn from and follow David's example in these verses.

Understanding the "doctrinal" or "prophetic" context of Psalm 18 is vital. This psalm is an incredible prophecy concerning the second coming of Christ—and His deliverance of His people, the nation of Israel. In 18:4–6, David describes the utter distress and hopelessness of the Jews during the coming time of Tribulation on this planet, while in 18:7–15, he describes the power and glory of "the Day of the Lord" —which, of course, is the second coming of

Christ to this earth! Understanding the prophetic context of this psalm helps us to make biblical sense (i.e. "rightly divide"—2 Tim. 2:15) out of David's obvious emphasis upon human works in 18:20–24. Keep in mind that after the church is removed from the earth at the rapture, those who believe during tribulation are not "sealed" with the Holy Spirit like we have been. As Jesus taught in Matthew 24:13, during the Tribulation Period, "believers" must "endure to the end" in order to be saved. Specifically, they must not take the infamous "mark of the beast (Antichrist)." In that way, they must "endure to the end"—the end of their life, or the end of the Tribulation Period.

Note that Psalm 19:1–6 corresponds to Romans 1:19–20. The creation of God most definitely shows forth His glory in countless ways. David even tells us in 19:4–6, just as Malachi did in Malachi 4:1–2, that the rising of the sun is a daily reminder and picture of the second coming of Christ!

Notice in 19:7–11 that David refers to the Word of God by seven different names: The LAW of the Lord, the TESTIMONY of the Lord, the STATUTES of the Lord, the COMMANDMENT of the Lord, the FEAR of the Lord, and the JUDGMENTS of the Lord. Notice also in these same verses, the six things he teaches us that the Word of God has the power to do: to convert the soul, to make wise the simple, to to rejoice the heart, to enlighten the eyes, to endure forever, and to provide warning and reward. No wonder David admonishes us in 19:10 to desire it more than gold, and to find that its sweetness to us spiritually, is actually sweeter than a honeycomb is to us physically.

In Psalm 20, notice once again, the Tribulation/Day of the Lord (second coming of Christ) context throughout. Psalm 20:7 is classic, and should characterize God's people in every dispensation and generation: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God!" May it be true of us today—and every day!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through the RISING of the SUN — Psalm 19:4–6 (Picturing the "Sun of righteousness"—Mal. 4:2, rising in the east at His second coming).

WEEK 25, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 21-29

OVERVIEW:

Psalms of victory (21), shame (25), innocence (26), devotion (27), hope (28) and glory (29); Psalms regarding the future sufferings (22), shepherding (23) and reign of Jesus Christ (24).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Sometimes Bible characters can almost seem "larger than life." Do you know what I mean? That may even be compounded if the Bible characters were also those God used to write the Scriptures themselves. Most of us have no problem recognizing that we're certainly no Moses, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah—or Paul, Peter and John! With all of our human frailties, weaknesses and sins, we may, at times, find it somewhat difficult to even relate to these men!

Perhaps that's the reason most of us are able to find so much comfort and strength through the Psalms! In the Psalms, it's almost as if David and the other writers pull back the curtain of their humanness—and allow us to see that though these were certainly amazing men—they still possessed the same frailties, weaknesses and sins as the rest of us! The Psalms is very simply a Book of the Bible where these men were pouring their hearts out, as they were personally relating God to their real, every day lives—and just very honestly, candidly and even emotionally—expressing whatever they happened to be thinking and feeling at the moment. And sometimes those thoughts and emotions could be all over the map!

For example, just in today's reading alone, in one place David cries out to the Lord, basically saying, "Answer me, Lord, because if You don't, I'm going to feel like I've gone to hell!" (Psa. 28:1) Wow! In another place, he says in effect, "Lord, I know I've greatly sinned against you, but, O God, for Your name's sake, please pardon me!" (Psa. 25:11) You can, no doubt, sense his extreme desperation in these verses! And yet, by the time we get to Psalm 29 in today's reading, David finds himself sitting on top of the world again—joyfully declaring the unrivaled power, majesty and glory of the Word of God—what David calls seven times in this psalm, "the VOICE of the Lord!" Sometimes it's difficult to get our minds wrapped around the fact that this man, who many might refer to as "flighty," or even as an "emotional basket case"—is the same man who killed a lion and a bear with his own hands... the same man who slew Goliath with a slingshot and a stone... and was the same valiant warrior in battle who the women of Israel boasted had killed tens of thousands of God's enemies. (1 Sam. 18:7) But you see, God didn't want the man that He had personally chosen to rule in His stead in Israel to be a man who could put on a fake smile and act like everything was okay when it wasn't. God wanted a man with a heart brave enough to slay giants and tens of thousands of mighty warriors—and yet, tender enough to lead Israel with a compassionate heart, like the heart of God Himself! (Acts 13:22)

Because the Psalms are so personal and candid, we can easily find one (or more!) for any and every circumstance or emotion we encounter. Again, just in today's reading, if we need a reminder of God's wonderful care and protection in our lives, Psalm 23 awaits to provide encouragement and strength! If we find ourselves weighed down by the guilt of our past sin, we can humbly turn Psalm 25 into a personal prayer to remind us of God's amazing grace and forgiveness! Should we find ourselves being falsely accused, Psalm 26 can help us to lift, not only our voices to the Lord, but our very souls! To provide us this kind of biblical hope and encouragement is one of the key reasons God included this tremendous Book into the canon of scripture! Praise the Lord!

Notice in Psalm 22, that God inspired David to write a song about the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross a 1000 years before His actual crucifixion! This Psalm cannot be about David, because never did God actually forsake him (22:1)—though as has already been noted, there were many times David "felt" as though God had! Never were David's bones ripped out of joint. (22:14) Never was David so overtaken with thirst that his tongue actually clave to his jaws. (22:15) Never were David's hands and feet pierced with nails. (22:16) And never were David's garments stripped from him, and lots cast for them so they could be given to the "lucky winner." (22:18). In all the annals of history, only one man and one event fits this precise description—our Lord Jesus Christ at His crucifixion! (See Mat. 27:35–49; John 19:23–24,28–30)

In the writing of Psalm 22, it's almost as if God invited David to write down the most horrific kind of suffering and death he could possibly imagine—and then put it to music. The song includes everything that is the most hurtful and painful in the human experience: betrayal, false accusation, humiliation, physical torture and abandonment. Then, a millennium later, it was as if God turned David's nightmare into an abominable reality, subjecting His only begotten Son to the very scenario David described. In so doing, however, God forever settled any accusations that He is ignorant of, indifferent to, or absent in our human sufferings—for He endured all that the human imagination could possibly contrive. Because of the cross of Christ, never could any human being accuse God of not understanding what they're going through! (See Heb. 4:14–16; 2:9–10,14,17–18)

Note that David's "mission statement" of sorts, is found in Psalm 27:4 and 8. David set his entire life to one goal: the passionate pursuit of God! (And remember, that's our goal through the 52 Weeks of Pursuit! To passionately pursue God through the pages of His Word!) David ferociously sought God in and through every situation and circumstance of his life. In the depths of depression, David scratched and clawed his way to find the reason for God's apparent silence. At the peak of joy, he rejoiced and delighted in the glory and strength of his sovereign God, both in prayer and in song! In whatever emotional state David found himself, it caused him to cry out for God, and to seek Him with all of His heart! That's why David was able to find such graphic pictures and illustrations of God in every aspect of his life. Again, just in today's reading alone, David was able to see God as a SHEPHERD (Psa. 23), a LIGHT (Psa. 27), a ROCK (Psa. 28) and as THUNDER. (Psa. 29) Because David was "seeking God," he was able to see God all around him. Like Jesus said in Luke 11:9, "SEEK, and ye shall FIND!" And like Moses said in Deuteronomy 4:29, "But if from thence thou shalt SEEK the Lord thy God, thou shalt FIND him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul!" Oh, may we seek Him like that!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Psalms 22, 23, and 24 provide a prophetic description of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Psalm 22 presents Christ as our suffering Savior (Matt. 27:46), while Psalm 23 reveals Him as our risen Shepherd (John 10:11), and Psalm 24 makes us witnesses of His future triumphant return as the King of glory. (Rev. 19)

WEEK 25, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 30-36

OVERVIEW:

David's adoration of God's mighty power; David's trust in God; the blessedness of God's forgiveness; the Lord hears the righteous; David's prayer for safety; the contrast of the godly and the wicked.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The historic context of Psalm 30 is established by the title: "A Psalm and Song at the Dedication of the House of David." This psalm has tremendous prophetic ramifications, however, as it foretells the coming history of Israel—namely, Israel's horrendous "night of weeping" (30:5b), followed by the "joy that cometh in the morning" (30:5c), when the Day of the Lord arises on this planet at the Second Coming of Christ, as He establishes His millennial kingdom. In a practical or devotional application, the psalmist provides an example for us to "extol" the Lord (30:1); to "sing" and "give thanks" to Him (30:4,12); and to "cry" out to Him, making "supplication" to Him. (30:8)

Psalm 31 is significant for several reasons. First, it leads us to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His very last words before He died: "Father, 'into thine hand I commit my spirit.'" (31:5 c.f. Luke 23:36) Secondly, it's significant because of the descriptive words and phrases that point to the awesomeness of our God. He is our "Righteousness" (31:1); our "Strong Rock" (31:2); our "House of Defense" (31:2); our "Rock and Fortress" (31:3); our "Guide" (31:3); our "Strength" (31:4); and the "Preserver of the faithful." (31:23). Is there anything you could possibly face today that one or more of those characteristics do not address?

Depending upon what situations and circumstances of life we may be facing at a particular time, sometimes as we read the psalms, they can almost feel as if we wrote them! A good example of that for many of us may be found in 31:9–24. If you are facing what seems to be an insurmountable foe today, try using the words of the psalmist in these verses to voice your prayer to the Lord.

Psalm 32 is a psalm of confession. Verses 1–4 show us the result of not "cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (2 Cor. 7:1) Verse 7 reminds us of the tremendous biblical place of "singing" in the midst of spiritual warfare. (2 Chr. 20:21–23; Col. 3:16; Eph 5:19)

In Psalm 33 the psalmist praises the Lord on an instrument of 10 strings. (33:2) No, we may not be able to play a musical instrument with 10 strings to praise the Lord, but we can certainly BE one! We can use our two feet to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." (Col. 1:10) We can use our two hands to hold the powerful sword of God's Word to carry out the work of the Lord. (Eph. 6:17b; 1 Cor. 15:58) We can use our two eyes to see the needs of the people around us. (1 Joh. 3:17). We can use our two ears to hear the Word of the Lord. (Jam. 1:19; Pro. 2:2) We can use our neck to bow our will in submission to Christ's Lordship. (Exo. 32:9) And, we can use our mouth to praise the Lord, to speak the Word of the Lord to the lost, and to speak words of comfort, encouragement, and hope to believers. (Psa. 34:1; Eph. 6:19; Heb. 3:13) May we all "BE" an instrument of 10 strings to praise the Lord today—and every day!

The psalmist prayed in Psalm 33:8, "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." This prayer will be answered at the Second Coming of Christ when "every knee shall bow and every tongue

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father!" (Phil. 2:10–11; 2 Thes. 1:7–10). Psalm 33:12–22 is a great way of saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)—and if God be against us, it doesn't matter who is for us!"

Should we find ourselves living in fear today, Psalm 34:1–4 presents a sevenfold prescription for being "delivered from all our fears" (34:4):

1. Bless the Lord at all times. (34:1a)
2. Allow His praise to continually be in our mouth. (34:1b)
3. Make our boast solely in the Lord. (34:2a)
4. Demonstrate a spirit of humility. (34:2b)
5. Magnify the Lord with other believers. (34:3a)
6. Exalt His name together with them. (34:3b)
7. Seek the Lord (34:4a)

Psalm 35:1–9 is a reminder to us of the lessons we learned about spiritual warfare from 2 Chronicles 20. The psalmist reiterates the truth that...

- "The battle is not yours, but Gods." (2 Chr. 20:15 c.f. 35:1a)
- "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle." (2 Chr. 20:17a c.f. 35:1b)
- "Set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (2 Chr. 20:17b c.f. 35:3–4)

Note in Psalm 35:12, that in a "rational" world—"no good deed goes unrewarded." In the "real" world, however, "no good deed goes unpunished!" Sad, but true.

Psalm 36 contrasts the "wicked" man (36:1-4) with the man who "knows" the Lord—verse 10. (36:5-12) As we read these verses, may we keep in mind that the "old man" (i.e. our "flesh") described here in 36:1–4, is still a part of us—a part of us we have been commanded to "put off!" (Eph 4:22)

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through DAVID as he "COMMITTS HIS SPIRIT" to the Father — Psalm 31:5. (Luke 23:46)

As the "ANGEL OF THE LORD" — Psalm 34:7. (The Angel of the Lord is an Old Testament appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ)

As the One in whom NO BONE IS BROKEN — Psalm 34:20. (John 19:36)

WEEK 25, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 37-44

OVERVIEW:

Instructions regarding the destiny of the wicked; David's petition during a time of trouble; the brevity and vanity of life; prayer and praise for deliverance; sickness, betrayal and responding to enemies; the soul's longing for God's presence; deliverance and hope in God; complaint about defeat and cry for help.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we have clearly been able to observe through the first 36 psalms, the Book of Psalms is, obviously, a divinely inspired HYMNAL, or BOOK of PRAISE. What is often overlooked, however, is that it is also a Book chock full of PRACTICAL COUNSEL—or, that is actually a "HOW TO" MANUAL, if you will, for how to navigate spiritually through all types of difficulties, disappointments and discouragements! In today's reading alone, the Lord reveals to us...

- "HOW TO" deal with fretfulness, or anxiety. (Psalm 37)
- "HOW TO" cope when our strength is failing. (Psalm 38–39)
- "HOW TO" rest in God's faithfulness. (Psalm 40) And...
- "HOW TO" respond to a friend's unfaithfulness. (Psalm 41)
- "HOW TO" register a complaint when you can't see God's hand at work. (Psalm 44)

In Psalm 39 and verse 4, David prayed, "Lord, make me to know... the measure of my days." David's prayer is a powerful reminder that the brevity of life is an issue everyone should consider—not just senior citizens! He realized how easy it is to get so caught up with material and financial achievements, and other temporal values (40:6)—that we forget the real purpose of life. Our Lord reiterated this same truth in Luke 12:15, when He warned us to "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The psalmist also reminds us that compared to eternity, our life on earth is very short—and the opportunities we have to fulfill God's purposes for our lives will soon be "no more." (39:13) May the statement Jesus made in John 9:4 of the personal resolve that kept Him so completely focused on the Father's purposes for His life be the personal resolve of each one of us: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work!" Oh, may these words of Jesus and the words of the psalmist in Psalm 39 flood our hearts, and souls and minds with a passion to stay focused on God's purposes for our lives!

In Psalm 41, the psalmist also provides us a "HOW TO" MANUAL for praising and blessing the Lord even while bedridden. (41:3) Apparently, the psalmist was suffering from a debilitating physical ailment or injury of some kind. (41:5,8) What begins as a third-person description of the man who takes pity on the poor and needy (41:1–3), soon becomes the plea of a discouraged, bedridden saint: "Lord, be merciful unto ME: heal MY soul." (41:4) Notice that the longer the psalmist pours out his heart in this psalm, focusing his attention and energies on both pleading to the Lord and praising Him—the more confident he becomes in God's strength in his hour of need. Listen to the declaration of praise with which this song ends: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen!" (41:13) Should you find yourself in the trial of sickness and/or suffering today, allow the psalmist in Psalm 41 to flood you with hope and confidence, that even in your present circumstances, you can experience God's blessing—by focusing on blessing the Lord! Instead of complaining about your condition, do what the psalmist did! Use this time...

- To plead for God's mercy. (41:4,10)
- To praise Him for His deliverance. (41:1–2)
- To praise Him for His preservation. (41:2)
- To praise Him for His strength (41:3)
- To praise Him for His favor. (41:11) And...
- To just bless the name of the Lord! (41:13)

In Psalm 42, the psalmist likens his thirst for God to that of a deer who has been running through the forest and has now become so parched, that he is literally panting over the water in the brook. (42:1–2) May this powerful and graphic illustration likewise be descriptive of the continuing thirst in our souls for God through the 52 Weeks of Pursuit!

As in many of the psalms, in Psalm 43, as the psalmist honestly pours out his thoughts and feelings to the Lord regarding the dreadful circumstances of his life that were causing him to feel "cast off" by the Lord (43:2), and "cast down" in his soul (43:5)—we are able to steadily see the Lord lift him up out of his discouragement, flooding him with "strength" (43:2), "light" (43:3a), "truth" (43:3b), His presence (43:3c–4a), "joy" (43:4b), "hope" (43:5b), and "health of countenance." (43:5c)

In Psalm 44, it's almost the exact opposite! In the first half of the psalm, the psalmist is flooded with praise for God's faithfulness and blessing upon his people in the past. (44:1–8) Then, beginning in verse 9, he begins his honest complaint against the Lord, lamenting the fact that he's unable to see God at work in his life or in the lives of God's people. (44:9–14) He admits that it has caused him to be both "confused" and "ashamed." (44:15–16) Regardless of these thoughts and emotions, the psalmist declares his determination that he and the people of God will not "forget" God (44:17a), will not "deal falsely" with His "covenant" (44:17b), will not allow their "hearts" to "turn back" (44:18a), and will not allow their "steps" to stop following His "way!" (44:18b) The psalm ends with the psalmist passionately pleading with God to "awake" from His "sleep" (44:23), to stop "hiding His face" from them (44:24a), to stop "forgetting their affliction and oppression" (44:24b)—and "for His mercies' sake" to "help" and "redeem" them. (44:26) Something tells me that God answered the psalmist's cry!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD — Psalm 40:6–8 (Joh. 4:34; Heb. 10:7–9)

WEEK 25, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 45-53

OVERVIEW:

A description of our King and the King's daughter; the psalmist's confidence in and praise of God; the deception of worldly wealth; David's prayer of confession after sinning with Bathsheba; the tendency of the tongue toward evil; the foolishness of atheism.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Many of you have learned that there are three layers of application in Scripture. Because these three layers are so easily identifiable in the Psalms (and so necessary to really understand them!), perhaps the most profitable use of this space today will be to overview/review these three applications. In other words, today, rather than giving you a fish—let's focus on learning how to fish!

Application #1 – The Historical Application

Obviously, the events we read about in Scripture really happened to real people like you and me at a particular time in history. Understanding the historical context is vital to proper interpretation—and allows us to properly make the second application of Scripture ...

Application #2 – The Devotional or Inspirational Application

From the "real events, situations and experiences" of those "real people" we were just talking about in the Historical Application, we learn lessons from their successes and failures that we can apply to our own lives as we face similar situations and circumstances.

Almost every "Bible-believing" person is fully acquainted with these first two layers of application. Yet, there is a third layer that most people fail to see! And actually, it is the third application that is really the "spark-plug" that ignites the whole supernatural "engine" of the Bible, causing us to stand in complete awe of the Word of God—and the God of the Word!

Application #3 – The Doctrinal or Practical Application

This application identifies what the event or situation in history foreshadows or pictures "prophetically." It is the real "teaching" of the passage. (Note: "doctrine" = "teaching.") Time will not permit an exhausting of the subject, and barely a decent explanation, but the key to this application of scripture is recognizing that God uses the record of history in the Old Testament to point to the key events that will take place in the future. Far from being even remotely connected or mildly associated with the "allegorical" approach to biblical interpretation (i.e. Randomly choosing what you think or want the "hidden" meaning of the passage to be with no rhyme or reason from a hermeneutical standpoint), the doctrinal application employs strict rules of Bible study to make consistent prophetic applications. Once you begin to identify this third layer of application in the Psalms, you'll almost begin to wonder what you used to think the Psalms were about!

Let's take a minute or two to talk about these three layers of application as they relate to the Psalms.

In identifying the Historical Application, recognize that some event and/or circumstances and situations in the life of the psalmist prompted the writing of his song. Many times the Historical Application is even identified in the title, as in Psalm 51 in today's reading: "A psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." As you can understand, knowing that "historical" context will make this Psalm take on much more significant meaning—and application!

From a Devotional or Inspirational (Practical) standpoint, the Psalms are filled with personal application and meaning because they so mirror and express how we think and feel, not only about ourselves, but how we think and feel about God, life, people, etc.—as we face similar circumstances in our life. The psalms often provide a great "attitude adjustment" for us, as we see the psalmist work through similar experiences of life.

Though all of the Psalms in today's reading are jam-packed with this third layer of application (the Doctrinal or Prophetic Application), Psalm 46 is perhaps the best example for us to use to "open the windows," as it were, to help us to be able to see it. Obviously, the psalms are songs that were actually sung. The word "Selah" that you so often see appearing in the Psalms (71 times in all) is there because it is a rest written into the musical score. The word made it into the canon of God's Holy Word because God intended to use it as a key to help us identify the "prophetic" context of the passage. Understand this, at the Second Coming of Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ will arrive on this planet to establish His millennial reign. The "Millennium," as we refer to it, is a 1000 year period of "rest" on this planet, specifically identified in Revelation 20:1–6, and generally identified throughout scripture as "the day of the Lord,"—and many times, simply as "that day." That 1000 year "day," as it were, is the "rest" for the people of God that is talked about in Hebrews 4, and what Peter referred to in his sermon in Acts 3, as "the times of RESTitution of all things" and "the times of refreshing" in Acts 3:19–21.

Anytime we see the word "Selah," we must train our brain to put the brakes on, throw our eyes and our brain into reverse, recognizing that God just let us know what the passage is pointing to from a doctrinal or prophetic standpoint! (i.e. the Second Coming of Christ and/or the Millennium.)

Notice in Psalm 46, three perfect descriptions of the Millennium, each marked by the word "Selah"...

- Psalm 46:1–3
"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. SELAH."
- Psalm 46:4–7
"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. SELAH."

- Psalm 46:8–11

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. SELAH."

Notice also in Psalm 50:1–6, a perfect description of the Second Coming, and once again, notice what follows next... REST! ("Selah" – the Millennium!) You get the idea. I'll leave the rest of them in today's reading for you to see and enjoy for yourself!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through the 10 times the word "Selah" is used in today's reading, pointing to Christ's Second Coming and Millennial Reign — Psalm 46:3,7,11; 47:4; 48:8; 49:13,15; 50:6; 52:3,5.

WEEK 26, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 54-63

OVERVIEW:

A prayer of protection: a cry against deceitful friends; the psalmist's trust in God; David's prayer for deliverance from his enemies; David's confidence in God's promises.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In yesterday's comments in this section, the goal was to acquaint you with how God uses His Word in the Psalms through the three layers of application, more than simply highlighting the things He actually said. Because the psalms in today's reading are easily understood, we will again use this space to seek to help you to "learn how to fish" in the psalms, rather than simply "handing you a fish."

Please allow me to borrow from the insight and teaching of Bruce Wilkinson:

"Just as the nation of Israel was divided into many different tribes, so the Psalms can be divided into many different types. As you continue your journey through this book, you'll find it helpful to be able to classify each psalm you read. A majority of the psalms fall into one of three categories:

1. **Lament Psalms** are petitions addressed directly to God by the individual or community in the context of distress. They usually include a description of the problems, a confession of trust, and a vow of praise to God, uttered with the confidence that God can and will deliver His people. (examples: Psalms 3–7, 22, 42)
2. **Thank Psalms**, offered publicly by one or more worshippers, acknowledge God's faithful actions on behalf of His people in the past, or express confidence in His promise to act in the future. (examples: Psalms 18, 27, 62)
3. **Praise Psalms** are hymns based on the word praise or hallelujah. They are joyful expressions of adoration for God's greatness, acknowledging Him as Creator, Sustainer, and Lover of His people. (examples: Psalms 113, 117, 146–150)

In addition, you will encounter:

4. **Royal Psalms** are hymns describing the King, both earthly and heavenly, reigning over His kingdom. (examples: Psalms 2, 95–96)
5. **Woe Psalms** are poems expressing the psalmist's righteous indignation at God's enemies, and calling for God's swift retribution. (examples: Psalms 49, 109, 137)
6. **Acrostic Psalms** are highly stylized poems in which each new section, verse, or line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (examples: Psalms 9–10, 25, 35, 119)
7. **Pilgrim Psalms** are songs sung by worshippers on the way up to Jerusalem for the yearly feast. (examples: Psalms 120–134)

8. **Messianic Psalms** are prophetic songs describing the coming Messiah as King (Psalms 2, 24, 100), Servant (Psalms 22-23, 40, 60), and the Son of God. (Psalm 118)“

In today's psalms, do note that a good portion of them record the expression of David's heart and his confidence in God during some of his most difficult days: while being pursued (Psalms 54, 57, 59); having been betrayed (Psalm 55); and when he was brokenhearted. (Psalm 56) Note also that Psalms 54, 60, 61 and 63 are psalms of lament— watch for the use of the phrase, “O, God.”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the One Who was betrayed by his “friend” — Psalm 55:12. (Mat. 26:47–50)

As the One Who saves those who will call upon Him — Psalm 55:16–17. (Rom. 10:13)

As the Rock — Psalm 61:2; 62:2,6–7. (1 Cor. 10:4)

WEEK 26, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 64-70

OVERVIEW:

David's prayer of deliverance from his enemies; David's confidence in God's promises; David's exhortation to praise God for His goodness; the blessings of God upon His people; God's judgment upon His enemies; David's prayer in time of trouble.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Have you ever felt like the psalmist did in Psalm 64—like the whole world is against you? Take comfort today in the fact that even the "man after God's own heart" had many people who continually spoke evilly of him! And don't forget, Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when (notice, not "IF," but "WHEN!") men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. 2:11) And the reality is, the closer we grow toward Christlikeness and the more we are used by Him to accomplish His work—the more we can expect it! Biblically, that's just the way it works! It comes with the territory! Jesus went on to say, however, that rather than allowing the persecution to consume us and/or discourage us, we should "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Mat. 5:12) In other words, we should rejoice in the fact that we've ascended into the ranks of a whole bunch of godly people that God has been using all through the centuries to bring glory to Him! And again, the reality is— they all experienced the same exact treatment! We will not be the exception to the rule. Obviously, even Jesus Himself wasn't!

The good news is, the psalmist says, in effect, "What goes around, comes around." His actual wording is perhaps a little more articulate, "So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves." (Psa. 64:8) Paul's similar warning was, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Gal. 5:15) The principle is, when people use their tongue as a weapon—it will inevitably come back to rip 'em to shreds!

And don't you just love how the psalmist addresses God in Psalm 65:2? Listen to it: "O thou that hearest prayer." Listen, if we're ever looking for a 'reason' we should pray—how about this one... the God who created the entire universe and is holy beyond our wildest possible imagination and comprehension, said He'd listen! Wow! With a reason like, we certainly don't need to look for too many others! You may even want to take a minute right now to humbly tell God, "Thanks for listening!" Notice that the psalmist is back on this same glorious reality of the God of the universe actually "hearing us" in Psalm 66:18–20!

Note that the word "terrible" found in today's reading in Psalm 65:5; 66:3; and 68:35 is the old English equivalent of the modern day usage of the word "awesome."

Note also how the psalmist/God sets the context of Psalm 66:4 by his/His usage of the word "Selah" at the end of the verse: "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. SELAH!" The "whole earth" hasn't worshipped or sung to the Lord since Adam sinned in the Garden, and what's more, it won't until the Lord Jesus Christ has set in motion "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21) at the beginning of the Millennium—again, noted by the word at the end of 66:4... "Selah."

Psalm 66, 67 and 68 provide great insight into just how glorious the second coming of Christ and His millennial reign on the earth will actually be. Don't miss it in these psalms! It certainly gives a whole new meaning to the "New World Order" to which politicians from every nation are referring in these last days!

The name of God in Psalm 68:4, "JAH", is short for Jehovah (Yahweh), the "self-existing One," or the God who is "ever/always in the present." Psalm 68:18 prophesies the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul explained the meaning of this psalm as a prophecy concerning Christ in Ephesians 4:8. Christ conquered death and Satan, both of which held mankind in captivity until His resurrection. (Heb. 2:15)

In Psalm 69, David is literally singing "the blues." He voices what we've all felt at certain times of our lives, as his song is being sung out of a "sea of troubles." (69:1-2) Psalm 69:9 was historically true of David: "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." And yet, prophetically, John lets us know in John 2:17 that it was, likewise, fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. In light of the devotional or inspirational application of scripture, we would do well to ask ourselves whether this verse is, likewise, true of us. Are we so passionately in love with our Savior, and are we so completely zealous for Him to be glorified, that when His name is "reproached" (also translated "defied" and "blasphemed"), that the reproach of it falls upon us the same way it falls upon Him? In other words, when God's name is blasphemed and defied, do we feel what God feels?

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the One who LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE — Psalm 68:18 (Eph. 4:8)

As the One who was BROKENHEARTED and FULL OF HEAVINESS — Psalm 69:20 (Mat. 26:37)

As the One given VINEGAR TO DRINK IN HIS THIRST — Psalm 69:21 (Mat. 27:34; Joh. 19:28-30)

WEEK 26, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 71-77

OVERVIEW:

David's prayer of praise and thanksgiving; David's prayer for Solomon (the "Son of David"); the mystery of the prosperity of the wicked; the rebuke of the wicked and proud; praise for God's majesty.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In Psalm 71, note the eight powerful names by which the psalmist refers to God, and note how personal he has made each one by the insertion of the personal pronoun, "my"...

- 1) My Strong Habitation. (71:3)
- 2) My Rock. (71:3)
- 3) My Fortress. (71:3)
- 4) My God. (71:4,22)
- 5) My Hope. (71:5)
- 6) My Trust. (71:5)
- 7) My Strong Refuge. (71:7)
- 8) My Help. (71:12)

There's plenty of biblical substance in just those eight names to have your own "personal" worship service! What a God we serve! May our pursuit of the Lord, like the psalmist, cause us to personally know our God by each of these titles!

As we continue our journey through life, we must always keep in mind that the enemy is constantly seeking to shut us down—and shut us up! That is, he wants to take our passion for God out of our souls—and he wants to take our praise for God out of our mouths. Understanding this desire of the enemy prompted the psalmist to say, "But I will hope continually, and yet praise thee more and more!" (71:14) Let's all make that our resolve today!

Psalm 72 is in my estimation, a "psalm of psalms." What an absolutely incredible Old Testament declaration of praise for the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming! This psalm lets us know that as the Queen of Sheba presents herself before Solomon, Israel's king, the "Son of David" as he was sitting enthroned in all of his wisdom, splendor, majesty, and glory over the entire world in 1 King's 10—that he was really just a picture of the splendor and glory that will be our Lord Jesus Christ's when He finally takes up His throne in His Millennial kingdom. (72:10) This psalm lets us know that in that day, the Lord Jesus Christ will unleash His power in judgment upon the earth (72:1–6), and will establish His authority and rule over the entire earth. (72:7–9) Read and rejoice, my brothers and sisters! May this reality cause all of us to LOVE His appearing with Paul (2 Tim. 4:8), LONG for His appearing with John (1 Joh. 3:1–3), and PRAY for His appearing, per our Lord's instruction in Matthew 6:10.

In Psalm 73, Asaph voices what all of us have felt at one time or another: Why does it seem that the wicked prosper, and the righteous get stepped on? (73:11–14) As Asaph said, sometimes it can just about get the best of you (73:2), and make you want to throw in the towel! (73:16) Why does it seem that that's the way it shakes out in life? Well, for the most part, because that's the way it is! In THIS life! What we sometimes forget, however, is that "THIS life" is not all there is! Asaph said that he was reminded of that when he went "into the sanctuary of God, and understood their end." (73:17) May God, likewise, grant us that eternal perspective today! (2 Cor. 4:18)

Psalm 74 is Asaph's attempt at "praying for the Kingdom to come"—and quite a good one at that! May it, likewise, be the prayer of our hearts!

Psalm 75 deals with Israel and the Second Coming of Christ. Notice in verses 2–6, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is speaking in the first person. How awesome is that? I bet you won't find that written in your Red Letter Edition of the Bible, but it should be! Notice also in verse 6 where "promotion cometh." Here's the clue the psalmist gives us: It's not from the EAST, nor the WEST, nor from the SOUTH. So, do you have any guesses for the direction from which it will come? That's right! The NORTH! How'd you guess? ;-) And why do you suppose it will come from the NORTH? Check out Psalm 48:2; Hebrews 12:22; Isaiah 14:13; and Ezekiel 1:4. The Bible is an amazing Book, folks!

Psalm 76 is another great description of our Lord's awesomeness—as he "arises in judgment" and descends upon this earth at His Second Coming to establish His rule and reign. (76:9) Can you answer the question of 76:7: "Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?" Why don't we allow the words of the old hymn to answer it for us? "No, not one! No, not one!"

Psalm 77 is, likewise, a description of the Second Coming and Millennium. Just when the nation of Israel is "in the day of [her] trouble" at Armageddon, when all of the nations of the earth have converged upon Israel and she is crying out, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" (77:7-9)—then notice the very next word: "Selah!" It is just then, when the only direction Israel can possibly even look is up, that the Lord Jesus Christ will step out of heaven riding on a white horse, with the armies of heaven behind Him (Rev. 16:15–21; 19:11–19)—and go absolutely ballistic upon all His enemies to establish "peace on earth and good will toward men." Verses 16–19 of Psalm 77 are a description of the Second Coming of Christ, as our Lord steps out of the third heaven, descends through "the deep" that is above our heads (Gen. 1:6–7; Job 38:30; 41:31–32), and comes thundering into the earth's atmosphere, all the way down to the Mount of Olives. (Zec. 14:4) What a day that will be! Let's pray it'll be seven years from today!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ROCK — Psalm 71:3 (1 Cor. 10:4)

As the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE — Psalm 72:2, 4 (2 Thes. 1:5–9)

As the SPEAKER in Psalm 75:2–6

WEEK 26, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 78-82

OVERVIEW:

The judgment of the Lord against disobedience; Asaph's prayer against enemies; Asaph's prayer for mercy and restoration.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 78 is just an absolutely incredible psalm. What it provides is an abbreviated overview of Israel's history from Exodus 7 to 2 Samuel 10.

As we learned in Numbers 14:18 and Exodus 34:6-7, God warns that the iniquities of the fathers are visited all the way down to the third and fourth generations! In other words, the effects of sin are incredibly far reaching! And again, I remind you, the principle concerning the "iniquities of the fathers" is not teaching that JUDGMENT for a father's iniquities are visited to the third and fourth generation, but that the PROPENSITIES toward those particular iniquities are "visited" that deep into a family line. At anytime, however, anyone in a family can choose to trust Christ as their Savior, and thereby, also choose to refuse to provide the "visitor" entrance into their lives, and not only break the generational cycle of sin—but by God's grace, choose to create a cycle of righteousness! And that's really what Psalm 78 is all about! It lets us know, that the "righteousnesses of the fathers," as it were, are likewise "visited" to the third and fourth generation! Notice the four generations in 78:5-6...

Generation # 1 — "OUR FATHERS..."

Generation # 2 — "that they should make them known to THEIR CHILDREN,"

Generation # 3 — "that THE GENERATION TO COME might know them"

Generation # 4 — "who should arise and declare them to THEIR CHILDREN."

Notice that the psalmist also provides in this psalm, the four reasons it is so important to pass this kind of righteous heritage to our generational offspring. (78:7-8) Notice that two are positive and two are negative:

Positive — "That they might set their hope in God..."

Negative — "And not forget the works of God..."

Positive — "But keep his commandments..."

Negative — "And might not be as their fathers."

Notice in verse 29 of Psalm 78, one of the most horrific things that God could ever do to a person— give them what they want! (i.e. "He gave them their own desire") As this psalm goes on to say, it is a collision course for disaster without exception, because what man naturally "desires"—is always completely contrary to what God desires for him! Paul writes to his young son in the faith, Timothy, warning him about four things we "naturally desire" (i.e. "love"):

"Self" — (2 Tim. 3:2)

"Pleasure" — (2 Tim. 3:4)

"Money" — (1 Tim. 6:10)

"This present world" — (2 Tim. 4:10)

Psalm 78:29 should cause all of us to pray, "O God, please don't give me what I want!"

In 78:40–41, notice five things Israel did against God after their deliverance out of Egypt—keeping in mind that 1 Corinthians 10:6 and 11 specifically warns us to be sure that we don't allow to happen to us in our "exodus" (God delivering us from our bondage to sin, Satan and self!), what happened to Israel in their exodus! Notice...

They "provoked" God — (Psa. 78:40a c.f. 1 Thes. 5:19)

They "grieved" God — (Psa. 78:40b c.f. Eph. 4:30)

They "turned back" from God — (Psa. 78:41a c.f. 2 Tim. 4:10)

They "tempted" God — (Psa. 78:41b c.f. 1 Cor. 10:9)

They "limited" God — (Psa. 78:41c c.f. Heb. 4:2)

Notice also that these five things were the result of the two root sins listed in verse 42: "They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." Practically speaking, we get ourselves into a whole bunch of sin problems when we forget ("remember not") the awesome thing God did on our behalf the day He saved us ("delivered us from the enemy")... and all of the things God did by "His hand" to bring us to that point (John 6:44)... and all of the things He has done by "His hand" since He has delivered us. (Rev. 2:4–5; Rom. 1:21) Deuteronomy 6:12 says it plainly... "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." God help us today—to "remember!"

Psalm 79 and 80 are simple to understand for anyone who understands that there are three layers of application of Scripture. Both psalms point doctrinally (prophetically) to Israel during the latter part of the Great Tribulation just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Notice that the "wild beast" in Psalm 80:13 is defined in Hosea 13:8—and is none other than "the Beast" of Revelation 13. He is like a "leopard" (Hos. 13:7), a "bear" and a "lion" (Hos. 13:8), just as in Revelation 13:2 and Daniel 7:3–6. It's amazing what God will reveal (1 Cor. 2:10) when we approach God's Book the way He told us to approach it! (1 Cor. 2:13 — "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" — i.e. comparing Scripture with Scripture!)

In Psalm 81, the "solemn feast day" in verse 3 points to the second coming of Christ—which will line up, just as did the first coming of Christ—with the Feast of Tabernacles. It's way too detailed to get into here, but for a little "recreation," and "enjoyment," check out 2 Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 8:18; Hosea 9:5; 12:9; Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:13; 31:10; 2 Chronicles 8:13 and Ezra 3:4.

Be sure to note the context in Psalm 82, as once again, God sets it for us by the insertion of the word "Selah" (82:2)—and then nails it for us in the last verse, saying, "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations!" What an awesome God—and an awesome Book!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the SHEPHERD — Psalm 80:1 (Joh. 10:11)

As the ONE WHO WILL ARISE TO DELIVER ISRAEL OUT OF HER TROUBLE — Psalm 80:7,14,19; 82:8 (Rev. 16:15–21; 19:19.)

WEEK 26, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 83-89

OVERVIEW:

The psalmist's cry for deliverance for Israel; the blessedness of living in the midst of God's presence; David's desire to walk in truth; cry for deliverance from death; praise for God's covenant and promises.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 83 is another psalm that points us prophetically to the time of the second coming of Christ. Asaph describes this incredible event, as do the other inspired writer's of scripture, as a time when all of the nations of the world (83:6–8) will have converged "together with one consent" (83:5a), "confederate against" the nation of Israel (83:5b), to "cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." (83:4) As we have seen repeatedly, just at the time when Israel's back will be against the wall at the end of the Tribulation Period, when from a human standpoint, she is utterly helpless and hopeless, with nowhere to turn—at that very moment our Lord Jesus Christ will step out of heaven and answer their prayers! (83:1) The Apostle John reveals that Christ will return with such fury against Israel's enemies in that day that their blood will literally rise up to the horse's bridles in the Valley of Megiddo! (Rev. 14:20) Asaph's prayer in 83:13–18 will, in fact, be answered! "O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth!" Hallelujah!

May this incredible prayer and prophetic promise serve as a great reminder to us of God's power and ability, in those times when our backs are against the wall, and from a human standpoint, we find ourselves utterly helpless and hopeless, with nowhere to turn! May this psalm remind us that "there is nothing too hard for the Lord!" (Jer. 32:17) May it remind us that our God hears and answers prayer! (Psa. 65:2) May it flood us with confidence that "in the day of [our] trouble," He can and will step in to do what could never be done in our own strength or power. (Psa. 86:7) May we also not miss that He has already proven that He can and will answer our prayers in this way—because that is exactly how Ephesians 2:11–17 describes what our Lord did on our behalf when in our lost condition, we cried out to the Lord for our salvation! At that time, not only were our spiritual backs against the wall, but we were totally without help and hope, with nowhere else to turn, and Christ stepped in to do what we could have never done in our own strength or power. And again I say, hallelujah!

Note that the basis for the psalmists requests in the last verse of this Psalm, should be the overarching desire, passion and prayer of our hearts in and through every aspect and dimension of our entire lives... "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH (the "self-existing One"), art the most high over all the earth." (83:18)

Notice that the context for the outpouring of praise that the psalmist offers to the Lord in Psalm 84 is, once again, rooted in the millennium, or "the day of the Lord." (84:4,8... "Selah!") Notice in 84:1, that during the millennium, our Lord Jesus Christ will once again "tabernacle" among us. (Psa. 84:1; Joh. 1:14 — "dwelt" = "tabernacle") We would do well to ask ourselves today whether the passion of the psalmist's heart for God and His glory in verse 2 expresses what is in our hearts today! Can we genuinely and honestly say with the psalmist, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God?" (84:2)

The last part of 84:11 is also a great promise and reminder... "the Lord will give grace and glory: NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD FROM THEM THAT WALK UPRIGHTLY." God most certainly "withholds" certain things, but contrary to Satan's lies (see Genesis 3:5), it is never because He is "withholding" some "GOOD" thing from us. His restrictions are always to keep us from something He knows will be BAD for us, and ultimately, be harmful to us and/or destroy us. It is sometimes difficult to get our flesh to really believe that, and the "father of lies" is at every turn more than willing to convince us otherwise. (Joh. 8:44) In light of that, the last verse of Psalm 84 is very fitting, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." (84:12)

The millennial context is also seen in Psalm 85. The description of that time is laid out beautifully in verse 10. It will be that time on this planet when "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (85:10) It is also a beautiful thing when the word pictures in this verse are found in the life of a New Testament believer! "Mercy" with no regard for "truth" makes us wishy-washy, spineless, and way too accommodating of unholy doctrine and unholy living in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, "truth" with no regard for "mercy" makes us harsh, judgmental, and unloving. God's intention, is that like His Son (Joh. 1:14c), we have a perfect balance of both! (See Eph. 4:25, then Eph. 4:15.)

Psalm 86:5 and 15 are a personal favorite. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee... Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." How many times do we need those reminders—especially those of us who are prone toward feeling the need of doing some sort of "penance," as it were, before we can let go of our spiritual failures and sins? I love the fact that the psalmist reveals to us that before we even come to Him, He is "READY TO FORGIVE!" He made that abundantly clear by the willful offering of His only and beloved Son! (1 Joh. 4:9)

For those who find themselves in the depths of despair today, find comfort and solace by using the words of the psalmist in Psalm 88 as he lifts his complaint up to the Lord—and then, allow the Lord to bring you up and out of your despair in Psalm 89, as the psalmist expresses his confidence and praise to the Lord!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

By the SEED OF DAVID — Psalm 89:3–4 (Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh – Matt. 1:1; Luk. 3:31–32).

WEEK 27, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 90-99

OVERVIEW:

God's eternity and man's transitoriness; the security of the one who trusts in the Lord; praise for God's goodness; the majesty of the Lord; the vengeance of the Lord; a call to sing, worship, and praise the Lord; the Lord's power and dominion; praise for the Lord's righteousness; the exaltation of the Lord as our holy King.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 90 is unique for several reasons: First, it's unique because it was the first psalm ever written, obviously then, also making it the oldest psalm! Secondly, it's unique because of its unsuspecting author... it was written by Moses! (Note that the very next psalm, Psalm 91, was also written by Moses.) And be sure to notice the prophetic application of Psalm 90:4: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." In the Old Testament, there were three watches to a Jewish night. (Jud. 7:19) In the New Testament, there are four watches of the night. (Mar. 6:48) Note that Christ was born (i.e. His first coming) in the "first watch of the night," and He will return (i.e. His second coming) in the "fourth watch of the night" (Mat. 14:25)—which is the "morning watch" (Mar. 13:35), and hence the title, "the Day of the Lord"—when the "SUN (!!!) of Righteousness will arise!" (Mal. 4:1-2)

Note also in Psalm 90:10 that the normal lifespan for a typical man until the Second Coming of Christ is 70 years (i.e. average age at death). The Lord will "take that up a few notches" for those born during the Millennium (Isa. 65:20), as men will live to be several hundred years of age, just as they did in some Old Testament times. (Gen. 5)

In terms of "numbering our days" (90:12), the point is, "redeem the time" (Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:16), or make the absolute most of each day! If we were to take "numbering our days" literally ...

If you are age 20, you have 18,250 days to live.
If you are age 25, you have 16,425 days to live.
If you are age 30, you have 14,600 days to live.
If you are age 35, you have 12,775 days to live.
If you are age 40, you have 10,950 days to live.
If you are age 45, you have 9,125 days to live.
If you are age 50, you have 7,300 days to live.
If you are age 55, you have 5,475 days to live.
If you are age 60, you have 3,650 days to live.
If you are age 65, you have 1,825 days to live.
If you are age 70, you are now on "borrowed" time!

But also keep Proverbs 27:1 in mind! "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth!" Remember, none of us are guaranteed 70 years—that's just the average lifespan! We must approach each day as if it will be our very last. And remember, also, what time it is on God's clock! We are the generation whose days will, no doubt, be shortened by the Rapture, so once again, it just emphasizes the main point of Psalm 90:12: Live each day as if it were your last—because it might just be!

Psalm 91 is another personal favorite. Without understanding the doctrinal/prophetic application of Scripture, however, you can get yourself more than just a little messed up—by claiming promises that are not intended for you, or promises that are not intended for you in THIS life. Though most Bible scholars are unable to identify the prophetic application of this Psalm as it applies to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Satan understood it very well! Satan makes this identification in Matthew 4:6 (91:12), and the Holy Spirit records it to reveal (I Cor. 2:10, 13) the real meaning of Psalm 91. (Note also that there is a double prophetic application in Psalm 91 in that the verses also apply to the remnant of Jewish saints in the Great Tribulation. (91:3,5,6,10) Any way you slice it, God's people in the Church Age are not promised protection from "the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." (91:5–6) There are a minimum of 50 million people in the Church Age who sought with everything within them to "dwell in the secret place of the Most High," who were shot through with arrows; sewn in the skins of animals and thrown to wild beasts; and placed on the rack to have every joint, every ligament, every tendon, and every muscle totally ripped to shreds! They were burned at the stake; crucified; boiled in oil; or had done to them anything and everything the devil could imagine and could prompt people to mete out on God's precious saints. And that's not to mention a minimum of another 50 million saints who have been struck down in wars, or by some sickness or disease (pestilence). (91:5–6)

There is, however, an incredible devotional/inspirational application of this Psalm for those of us living in the Church Age:

1. There is a "secret place" (91:1) of intimacy with Christ that we can experience in our relationship with Him that others don't experience. (Isa. 57:15; 4:6; 32:2; Song of Sol. 2:3,6)
2. Our eyes will one day "behold and see the reward of the wicked" (91:8), as we (Church Age saints) will be the ones who make up the "armies" that follows the Lord out of heaven at His Second Coming when He returns to the earth to unleash His judgment. (Rev. 19:11–16; Isa. 63:1–4)
3. Once we have been raptured and have entered into our physical "secret place" (91:1; Joh. 14:3), then "no evil shall ever befall [us]" (Psa. 91:10a), "neither shall any plague come nigh [our] dwelling!" (91:10b)
4. We will be "delivered" at the Rapture, at which time He will "set [us] on high." (91:14)
5. The Lord has not promised us, as Church Age saints, the ABSENCE of trouble in this life, but He has promised His PRESENCE "with us" through it! (91:15; Heb. 13:5; 2 Cor. 12:9)
6. The Lord has and will, both "deliver" and "honor" us. (Ps. 91:15; Joh. 5:44; 12:26)
7. We will be "satisfied" with "long life" beyond our wildest dreams! Jesus called it "eternal life," and I think you'd agree, that's a long, long time!

Many other incredible prophetic and devotional truths unfold in the remainder of the psalms in today's reading (92–99) that hopefully, you are now beginning to see how to identify and apply for yourself. Enjoy!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the GOD WHO COVERS WITH HIS FEATHERS — Psalm 91:4 (Mat. 23:37).

As the ROCK OF OUR SALVATION – Psalm 95:1 (1 Cor. 10:4).

As the LORD WHO JUDGES THE EARTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH — Psalm 96:13 (Rev. 16:5–7).

As the LORD WHO RETURNS IN FLAMING FIRE — Psalm 97:4 (2 Thes. 1:7–9)

WEEK 27, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 100-105

OVERVIEW:

Exhortation to praise God; the psalmist's profession of uprightness; the prayer of an afflicted man for mercy upon himself and Zion; praise for the Lord's mercies; praise for the Lord's majesty; the wonderful works of the Lord in behalf of Israel.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The first verse in today's reading is a call to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands!" (100:1) It is a reminder that God's passion is—and has always been—the world-wide worship of His Son from every kindred, tongue, people and nation! We must never lose sight of the scope of our commission! We are to make disciples of all nations, or as verse one says, in "all lands." In light of God's passion to reach the whole world, perhaps we would all do well to ask ourselves a few pertinent questions...

- What are the things I am actively seeking to allow the Lord to do through me that would give evidence that I share His passion to see His Son glorified in "all lands?"
- Am I presently "discipling" someone—or stated differently, am I presently "reproducing a reproducer of reproducers?"
- When was the last time I actually opened my mouth to present the gospel to someone who is lost?
- Am I participating in any way to financially support the cause of missions in the world through my local church?

Note also in 100:2, we are to carry out our commission with "gladness"—not out of "guilt" or "obligation."

In a world that absolutely caters to the "lust of the eyes," Psalm 101:3 is a doozie! The psalmist says, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Evidently, some "more mature believers" in the 21st century must feel that in the name of their "liberty in Christ," they've "graduated" past obeying the extreme measures the psalmist clearly states under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in this verse! Unbelievably, in many places in the 21st century, when you suggest that "setting no wicked thing before our eyes" might include many (most?) movies, TV shows, commercials, magazines, advertisements, and websites—there's a strong chance you're going to get labeled "legalistic!" Maybe the question we should consider asking is, "What part of 'NO' in 'set NO wicked thing before your eyes' is even remotely difficult to understand?" We must be very careful, as Peter talked about, that our "liberty" doesn't become a "cloak of maliciousness" (1 Pet. 2:16); or as Paul said in Galatians 5:13, that we "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh!" Yes, we are gloriously free in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet, even in our "liberty" and "freedom," we have still been commanded to "cleanse ourselves from ALL filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting HOLINESS in the fear of God!" Obviously, then, there are still some things the Spirit of God fully identifies as "filthy" (2 Cor. 7:1) or "wicked" (Psa. 101:3), and from which He fully intends that we will willfully and aggressively separate ourselves!

Whereas verse 3 of Psalm 101 is a warning about HOW we spend our time, verse 4 warns us about with WHOM we spend it! We have been called to reach the lost, but we must recognize the reality of verses like 1 Corinthians 15:33:

"Be not deceived: evil communications (also translated "company") corrupt good manners (or morals)." Our most intimate associations must be with brothers and sisters in Christ, who have likewise (along with us!) surrendered themselves to Christ's Lordship. Note the continuation of the thought in 101:7: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight!"

At the times in our lives when we find ourselves "really going through it," Psalm 102 is a great place to find refuge. Notice the title (listed in most Bibles): "A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." Of course, prophetically, this psalm points, once again, to the nation of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation when the Lord Jesus Christ will "arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come!" (102:13) Note also, the definite Second Coming references in 102:16 and 102:21–22. But devotionally, allow this psalm to minister to you in your affliction today!

Considering the admonition in Psalm 103:1, I know I've sought to bless the holy name of the Lord from "my soul"—I'm just not certain I've ever actually done it with "all that is within me." Have you? I'm absolutely certain that's what the worship of heaven will be (Rev. 4), the difficulty is in bringing the worship of heaven to earth—and to our lives... now!

Note that Psalm 103 begins and ends the same way: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This psalm is about God's MERCY. The nature of mercy (vs. 4), the measure of mercy (vs. 8), the scope of mercy (vs. 11), and the duration of mercy. (vs. 17) Perhaps the more we learn about and grow to appreciate the incredible mercy the Lord has extended to us, the more apt we will be to genuinely "bless the Lord" both from our "souls," and "with all that is within in us!" (103:1)

The first and last verse of Psalm 104, likewise, includes the exhortation to "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Whereas Psalm 103 addresses God's MERCY, Psalm 104 is all about God's MAJESTY, and focuses on the wonder of creation.

Psalm 105 is the first in a series of five Psalms that feature the phrase, "O give thanks unto the Lord." (See Psalm 106, 107, 118 and 136) This Psalm, along with Psalm 106, highlights Israel's history much like we observed in Psalm 78. The first five verses contain nine (9 is the number of fruit-bearing in the Bible) exhortations that should be carried out by every child of God in any dispensation:

1. "Give thanks." (105:1a)
2. "Call upon his name." (105:1b)
3. "Make known his deeds." (105:1c)
4. "Sing unto him." (105:2a)
5. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works." (105:2b)
6. "Glory ye in his name." (105:3a)
7. "Rejoice." (105:3b)
8. "Seek his face." (105:4)
9. "Remember his marvelous works." (105:5)

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the CREATOR ("It is He that hath made us") — Psalm 100:3 (Joh. 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

As the ONE WHO FORGIVES ALL OUR INIQUITIES — Psalm 103:3 (Mat. 9:6).

WEEK 27, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 106-109

OVERVIEW:

A recounting of Israel's rebellion and the Lord's faithfulness to deliver them; the deliverance of the Lord in the troubles of life; the psalmist's praise of the Lord and his cry of supplication for victory; the vengeance of God meted out upon His enemies.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we pick up in Psalm 106 in today's reading, the psalmist continues his praise and thanks to the Lord as he recounts God's mercy through Israel's history. Note that verse 8 identifies God's ultimate purpose in Israel's deliverance through the exodus: "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." Listen, that is a monumental declaration! And to make sure we didn't miss he point, God repeats that overarching principle in several places in the Old Testament. In Exodus 9:16, again, God was careful to let Israel know that the real issue of their exodus was "that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." As God told Ezekiel what to say to the elders of Israel as He recounted WHY He delivered them out of Egypt, again He said in Ezekiel 20:9: "But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt." And so, as you can see, God repeatedly lets Israel know, "I did what I did, and I worked how I worked—not first and foremost for YOU... but for ME! It was for MY NAME'S SAKE! It was so My name would no longer be polluted! It was so Who I really am could be known by the whole world! It was so My power could be known!"

And the reason these verses are so significant is because they have a very distinct application and a very direct impact on us! And I mean "us" as in "Church Age saints!" Because you see, God tells us something very important in 1 Corinthians 10:1–6 and 11! He lets us know that Israel's exodus out of their bondage in Egypt—was just a picture of our exodus from our bondage to sin and the world! (2 Tim. 2:26; Eph. 2:2; Note that Egypt is always a picture of sin and/or the world in the Bible!) Oh, sure, everything that happened concerning Israel all happened exactly as it was recorded in the Old Testament! It is historically accurate from beginning to end! But God so orchestrated the recording of it, to make sure that we understood that In the final analysis, contrary to "fundamental, Bible-believing, Laodicean" thought and teaching, Gods motivation behind OUR exodus was the same as it was for ISRAEL'S exodus! It was for HIS GLORY! It was for "HIS NAME'S SAKE!" (Psa. 106:8a; Eze. 20:9) He saved us so that His "mighty power could be known!" (Ps. 106:86) He saved us so His name could be "declared throughout all the earth!" (Exo. 9:16) In other words, the purpose God had in saving us, wasn't first and foremost, for US... it was for HIM! It was to display His glory! And that's certainly not to discount or diminish what incredible beneficiaries we are in that display—oh my, it could not be more wonderful and spectacular! But it screams to us that the theme of the Bible, the theme of salvation and the theme of every dimension of existence is not about US, or for US—it is about our holy, magnificent, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent GOD!

And please be sure that you understand, this is no small thing! This is not just some moot point! Understanding this truth is the difference between a "ME-centered" Christianity—and a "CHRIST-centered" Christianity! This simple point concerning God's real purpose in our salvation smacks totally against everything that even fundamental, Bible-believing Christianity in the Laodicean Age believes and teaches! In effect...

The "Christianity" OF OUR DAY:

- 1) Says that Christianity is primarily about God benefiting His creatures. (i.e. God exists for us.)

- 2) Says that the most important thing to God is people.
- 3) Asks, "How should I position my life to gain the most blessing?" (i.e. Seeks God's hand)

The "Christianity" OF THE BIBLE:

- 1) Says that Christianity is primarily about God glorifying His Son. (i.e. We exist for God.)
- 2) Says that the most important thing to God is His glory. (i.e. His name)
- 3) Asks, "How should I position my life to bring God the most glory?" (i.e. Seeks God's face)

No wonder Paul said, "In the last days perilous times shall come" (II Tim. 3:1), and that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (1 Tim. 4:1) We must be very careful and discerning!

Based on what 1 Corinthians 10:6 and 11 teaches us about how God recorded the history of Israel's exodus so that what happened to them doesn't happen to us, the things the psalmist lays out about Israel's history in Psalm 106 provide limitless application for our lives.

The theme of Psalm 107 is, "Oh that men would praise the Lord of his goodness, and for his wonderful works, to the children of men!" (See verses 8,15,21 and 31) All of the verses in-between are designed to help us to do just that! Again, the application of these verses to our lives is limitless!

In Psalm 108, note that the first five verses are a replica of Psalm 57:7–11 and verses 7–10 are a replica of Psalm 60:6–9.

There is certainly an historical application to David's life in Psalm 109, but the psalm is not primarily about David's situation—it's about the Messiah's humiliation, His confrontation with Satan, His exaltation over death, and the ultimate vindication of His life as the Father executes His vengeance. Though David composed this Psalm under the inspiration of God, of course, the words actually compose the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ—and every aspect of the prayer will be answered to the letter!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO MAKES THE STORM A CALM — Psalm 107:29 (Mat. 8:27; Joh. 14:27).

WEEK 27, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 110-118

OVERVIEW:

The Lord gives dominion to the King; the psalmist's praise for the works of the Lord; the blessed man; the Lord's exaltation of the humble; God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt; the heathen idols contrasted with Jehovah; thanksgiving for deliverance from death; a psalm of praise; thanksgiving for the Lord's saving goodness.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 110 is a very significant (and magnificent!) Psalm. It is specifically this Psalm that Jesus used to prove His deity when He sought to shut the mouths of the Pharisees in Matthew 22. That passage says "While the Pharisees were gathered together (see Matt. 22:23–35), Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions." (Matt. 22:41–46)

Notice in verse one of Psalm 110, that 1000 years before Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, David recognized that the Messiah, not only, existed ("The Lord said unto my Lord"), but acknowledged that the Messiah was "his Lord" ("The LORD said unto 'MY' Lord")—and understood that the Messiah would one day come in judgment upon His enemies ("Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"). Psalm 110 is quoted no less than seven times in the New Testament: Hebrews 1:13; 5:6; 7:17; Matthew 22:43–44; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:33–34; Luke 20:42–43.

Psalm 111 is a psalm of praise for the "works of the Lord." (111:2) God's "works" in this Psalm are mentioned in five different verses and described in nine different ways. Notice, God's works are:

1. Great. (111:2)
2. To be sought out. (111:2)
3. Honorable. (111:3a)
4. Glorious. (111:3b)
5. Wonderful. (111:4a)
6. To be remembered. (111:4b)
7. Powerful. (111:6)
8. True. (111:7a)
9. Judgmental. (11:7b)

Verse 10 of Psalm 111 is a great reminder to those of us living in the last days, because we have been brainwashed before coming to Christ, and for most of us, after coming to Christ—not to believe it! It is true as it stands, however, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!" Notice, not "reverential trust!" Not "holy reverence!" But "FEAR!" All of our lives, Satan has been bent on teaching us to FEAR what God told us NOT TO FEAR (2 Kng. 17:7,25)—and teaching us NOT TO FEAR what God TOLD US TO FEAR! (Exo. 20:20) It basically comes down to this: we will either fear God—or we will fear man. (Prov. 29:25) Jesus helps us get the issue in perspective in Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body (i.e. men), but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him (i.e. God) which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell!" How's that for tact and political correctness?

Psalm 112 describes the "blessed man" that we met in Psalm 1.

Psalm 113 describes the millennium.

Psalm 114 is a very brief overview of the events recorded in the Books of Exodus and Joshua, and that will be repeated at the Second Coming of Christ.

Psalm 115 admonishes three groups of people to "trust in the Lord" and find Him as their "help" (aggressive action AGAINST the enemy) and their "shield" (protection FROM the enemy). The three groups are "Israel" (v.9,12a), the "house of Aaron" (v.10,12b), and "ye that fear the Lord" (v.11,13). Recognize that in the prophetic application, the reference to "Israel" is specifically the Jews in the Tribulation. The reference to the "house of Aaron" points to the Levitical priests who will be serving in the Millennial Temple. And the prophetic reference to those who "fear the Lord" is pointing to Gentile converts during the Tribulation. When you factor in the Millennial application of verse 18, it takes on even more beauty and significance: "... we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord." Won't that be awesome?! Hallelujah!

Psalm 116 is a Messianic Psalm.

Psalm 117 is short... and sweet!

Psalm 118 is the middle of the Bible—and specifically verse 8: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." Verse 22 and 23 of Psalm 118 are incredibly significant, and will be quoted at key places in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter, and the Apostle Paul. Psalm 118:22–23 says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Jesus quoted this verse to the chief priests, scribes and elders of Israel to show them that they were about to be the ones who fulfilled this prophecy. (Mat. 21:42; Mar. 12:35–36; Luk. 20:42–43) When Peter preached to the high priest, scribes, rulers and elders of Israel in Acts 4, he quoted this verse to explain to them that they had actually fulfilled this prophecy. (Acts 4:5–11) When God inspired Paul to write the Book of Ephesians to reveal the mystery of the church, the body of Christ, he, too, quoted this verse in Ephesians 2:19–21.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE SEATED AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND — Psalm 110:1 (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1).

As the STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REFUSED — Psalm 118:22 (Mat. 21:42; Mar. 12:35–36; Luk. 20:42–43).

WEEK 27, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 119

OVERVIEW:

The greatness, power, and perfection of God's holy Word.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 119 is nothing short of a masterpiece. It is an "alphabet Psalm," meaning that in that each of the 22 stanzas that are each comprised of 8 verses, each stanza begins with the 22 consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (i.e. Alpha, Beth, Gimel, etc.). There is no greater treatise concerning the Word of God in the entire Bible—or in all of existence for that matter—than this Psalm. Note that 173 out of the 176 verses in this Psalm specifically refer to the Word of God, keeping in mind that there are at least eight different terms used in this Psalm to refer to God's perfect Word: 1) Law. 2) Testimonies. 3) Way/Ways. 4) Precepts. 5) Statutes. 6) Commandments. 7) Judgments. 8) Word/Words. Notice also that all eight of these terms are found in the first nine verses.

In terms of providing an overview of this incredible Psalm, it is difficult to even know where to begin. There are just so many moving parts—and all worthy of discussion—making a simple overview almost seem to diminish the beauty and significance of this incredible work of art. But do know this, any person who is serious about God and His Word needs to immerse themselves in this psalm—not only repeatedly, but continuously! This psalm reveals the key to becoming a man or woman of the Word—because it deals with our heart attitude toward the Word of God. It beautifully reveals to us that the real issue concerning God's Word is NOT, first and foremost, our "KNOWLEDGE" of the Bible, but our "LOVE" for the Bible. (Joh. 14:15,23)

In light of that reality, as we approach this psalm today, perhaps the best question we could ask ourselves is, "Do I genuinely LOVE the Word of God?" And it is extremely important for us to realize that answering that question isn't as easy as pointing to the fact that we have been faithful through the 52 Weeks of Pursuit—having already read through half of the entire Bible. That is certainly commendable, and yet, it isn't necessarily an indication of our love for the Word of God. For example, something as seemingly "spiritual" as reading through the Bible, might actually be something "carnal," because our motivation for doing it is the key! If our motivation for reading through the Bible is so we can "flaunt" that fact to others, or if it is somehow causing us to "feel good about ourselves" as Christians—it might be, that rather than our faithfulness being an indication of our LOVE for GOD and HIS WORD, it might actually be an indication of our LOVE for OURSELVES! (2 Tim. 3:1–2) Rather than revealing our PURSUIT of GOD—it may reveal that we are PURSUING OURSELVES! Rather than our pursuit being to "KNOW GOD" by pursuing Him through the pages of His Word, our real pursuit might be to impress others with our "KNOWLEDGE" of His Word! (1 Cor. 8:2) Do recognize that many times the "love of self" that Paul prophesied would be the overarching characteristic of believers in the last days, often comes in a very "spiritual-looking package!"

So, as we approach Psalm 119 today, would you take the time for some honest introspection to determine whether or not you genuinely "love" the Word of God? And perhaps you're thinking, "Well, if it's not as easy as pointing to the fact that I faithfully read it and seek to know it, how can I determine whether or not I love it—biblically?" That's one of the tremendous qualities of this incredible psalm! Because you see, as God inspired the "man after His own heart" (obviously, a man who loved God passionately!) to pen the psalms he composed—it is interesting that seldom does God choose to record those times when David actually expressed His love for Him! Actually, there are only two occasions where he actually does so, and as we read them, though they are certainly beautiful declarations, we're probably not going to be overwhelmed by what might be considered the "heartfelt passion" of his expression! (See

Psa. 18:1; 116:1) In Psalm 119 alone, however, David passionately expresses his love for the Word of God a whopping 11 times! There are certainly many lessons to glean and apply from that observation, but perhaps the most practical and applicable being the simple fact that it is impossible to separate LOVING the GOD of the WORD—from LOVING the WORD of GOD!

And one of the beautiful things about David's expressions of his love for the Word of God in Psalm 119, is that each time, God was careful in inspiring him to do so, to also include the characteristic his love for the Word of God actually produced in his life. What these expressions of David's love for the Word of God actually become for us, then, is a way for us to search our own hearts to determine biblically whether or not we love the Word of God! We can simply look at what God, through the psalmist, reveals were the practical and observable characteristics loving the Word of God produced in his life, and then seek to determine whether or not those characteristics are likewise present and observable in our own lives! What Psalm 119 reveals to us, then, are...

SEVEN WAYS TO KNOW IF YOU LOVE THE WORD OF GOD:

1. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY WHAT YOU HATE. (119:127–128)
 - a. You will HATE every FALSE WAY. (119:127–128)
 - b. You will HATE LYING. (119:163)
 - c. You will HATE VAIN THOUGHTS. (119:113)
2. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY THE HOLY ATTITUDE WITH WHICH YOU VIEW IT. (119:140,160,164,72,93,103,128,131,161)
3. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY WHAT CONSUMES YOUR THOUGHTS. (119:97,15,23,48,78,99,148)
4. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY THE JOY YOU RECEIVE FROM GETTING INTO IT AND LIVING IT. (119:47)
5. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY YOUR SURRENDER TO IT. (119:48)
6. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY YOUR INABILITY TO BE OFFENDED. (119:165)
7. You know you LOVE the Word of God... BY THE DESIRE IN YOUR INNERMOST BEING TO OBEY IT. (119:116–167)

Based on those seven divinely inspired characteristics—can you honestly say that you love the Word of God?

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

By the PSALMIST WHO DELIGHTED IN FULFILLING GOD'S WILL — Psalm 119:47 (Joh. 6:38; 15:10; 4:34).

WEEK 28, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 120-135

OVERVIEW:

Prayer for deliverance from lying lips; the Lord as the Keeper of Israel; prayer for the peace of Jerusalem; prayer for the Lord's help; praise for the Lord's deliverance of Israel; the blessing of trusting God; thanksgiving for the return from captivity; prosperity comes from the Lord; the blessedness of the fear of the Lord; prayer for the overthrow of Zion's enemies; hope in the Lord's forgiveness; childlike trust in the Lord; prayer for the Lord's blessing upon the sanctuary; the blessedness of unity; the blessing of the night watchers; praise for the Lord's works, and the vanity of idols and idol worship.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As the serpent (Satan) approached the woman in the Garden, just imagine how differently her plight would have been had she been able to declare the first verse in today's reading from Psalm 120: "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me!" And just imagine what the outcome might have been had the cry of her heart been the cry of the psalmist's heart in verse 2: "Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue!" Sure, it's a wonderful thing to consider what might have been had the woman applied these verses, but how wonderful would it have been had we, likewise, applied these verses at key times of temptation in our lives! Obviously, we can't do anything to change the voice we may have heeded in the past—but we can certainly do something about the voice we listen to today—and the remainder of our days!

Do note that verses 2–7 of Psalm 120 are all pointing to the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period in the prophetic application of these verses.

Psalm 121 also has incredible prophetic implications and applications for Israel. When her "help" comes, it will come from "the hills." (121:1) God is careful to name these "hills" in His Word:

1. Mount Sinai. (Deu. 33:2; Jud. 5:5; Psa. 68:8)
2. Mount Seir. (Eze. 35:2,3,7)
3. Mount Paran. (Deu. 33:2; Hab. 3:3)
4. Mount of Olives. (Zec. 14:1–6)

Note also in Psalm 121, that during the Tribulation Period, God will establish the nation of Israel (121:3), He will "preserve [them] from evil," (121:7) and from "this time forth" (i.e. from the time of the Second Coming and throughout the Millennium) they will "come in" and "go out" of Jerusalem. (121:8)

Psalm 122 is descriptive of what will take place in the Millennium.

If you're finding yourself in the midst of a trial that is causing you to feel like your back is against the wall, and you are crying out to God to pour out His mercy upon you, from a devotional or inspirational standpoint, Psalm 123 will bless your heart! To gain the prophetic application, go back and read it again from the perspective of a Jew in the Tribulation Period awaiting the arrival of the Messiah!

Psalm 124 describes Israel's literal deliverance... from a literal flood... and from literally being devoured by the enemy. For those who have the time to get into it, some key cross references are Isaiah 6:13; Revelation 6:9–11; Psalm 35:22; 44:22; Revelation 20:4; 12:15; Daniel 9:26; Jeremiah 51:34.

The prophetic context of Psalm 125 is the beginning of the Millennium, as verse 2 clearly identifies through the phrase: "from henceforth even for ever."

Psalm 126 refers to the Second Coming of Christ when He "turns the captivity of Zion" and establishes His Kingdom on the earth. The "soul-winners" in verses 5 and 6 are those also described in Ecclesiastes 11:1–6, and yet, from a devotional/inspirational standpoint, certainly apply to us. When we travail in prayer for the lost, watering the seed of God's Word (Luk. 8:11) that we have sown in the soil of men's hearts with our tears—we will reach people with the gospel! God help us to do so while we still have time! (Joh. 9:4b)

It is vitally important to understand and apply the truth of Psalm 127:1 to our marriage, our family, our church, and our nation: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it!" Psalm 128 is another vital and practical psalm in relation to our marriages and families.

Psalm 129 describes the scourging endured by our Lord Jesus Christ in His first coming, and yet, also points to the execution of His judgment at His second coming. Prophetically, Psalm 130 is a Messianic Psalm, and yet, from a devotional standpoint has tremendous practical implications. Psalm 131 is predominantly practical, with prophetic (Millennium) overtones in verse 3. Psalm 132 is literally filled with Millennium references. (See verses 11, and 13–18).

The "brethren" of Psalm 133:1 are the "brethren" of Matthew 25:34–42 and Matthew 28:10. Devotionally, however, don't miss how very "good" and "pleasant" it is when all of the "brethren" in a local church "dwell together in unity!" (133:1 c.f. 1 Cor. 1:10) God help us to know that "goodness" and "pleasantness!"

Only Psalm 117 is shorter than Psalm 134. The context of this brief psalm is obviously the Millennium. Recognize that the "house of the Lord" in 134:1, is a literal house that will be built on this earth during the Millennium. (Eze. 40–44) Notice also, that the "servants of the LORD" mentioned in this same verse will stand in that house again.

By now, hopefully you are learning how to recognize the prophetic context of the Psalms—identifying the Tribulation, Second Coming, and Millennium references—while still applying these verses to your life devotionally in a practical sense. Try your hand at it in Psalm 135!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As our PROTECTOR — the ONE WHO PRESERVES OUR GOING OUT AND COMING IN — Psalm 121:8 (Joh. 10:9)

As DAVID'S FRUIT or DESCENDANT who will sit upon David's throne — Psalm 132:11 (Luk. 1:32; Acts 2:29–30)

WEEK 28, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 136-143

OVERVIEW:

Thanks for the Lord's goodness to Israel; response to Israel's captivity; thanksgiving for the Lord's blessing; God's omniscience, omni-presence, and omnipotence; prayer for protection against the wicked; prayer for sanctification and protection; prayer for help in trouble; prayer for deliverance and guidance.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Psalm 136 is a masterful and beautiful way of showing and stating that the God of the Bible who is...

- "THE Lord;" (136:1)
- "The GOD of gods;" (136:2)
- "The LORD of lords;" (136:3)
- "The GOD of creation;" (136:5-9) and...
- "The GOD of heaven," (136:26)

... is tremendously merciful, and has been demonstrating His mercy throughout all of history! (136:5-26) Twenty-six times in 26 verses we are reminded: "for his mercy endureth for ever." And to help us to contextualize "mercy," as well as to help us have a genuine appreciation for it—keep in mind...

- JUSTICE is God GIVING us WHAT we deserve.
- GRACE is God GIVING us what we DO NOT deserve.
- MERCY is God NOT GIVING us what we DO deserve!

Psalm 137 is a tremendously sad song about God's people being taken captive by the godless Babylonian empire (representative of Satan's false kingdom of religious systems in the Bible). This song (psalm) can and should, likewise, be felt and sung by those of us living during this time of "Laodicean" captivity! (Rev. 3:14-22)

Psalm 138:2 is one of the most important statements in all of the Word of God concerning itself! The psalmist says: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." In light of what the Lord's "NAME" actually is (i.e. the sum total of all of His attributes!), and what the Lord says regarding His own name (i.e. Neh. 9:5: "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted ABOVE ALL blessing and praise!")—how then, could anything possibly be exalted "ABOVE" His name? It's certainly a great question—that also has a great answer! Listen, God magnified His Word "ABOVE" His name, because it is only through the Word of God that all that God is (His name), is revealed to us—and it is only through His Word that we actually learn how to "magnify" (Ps. 138:2), "exalt, bless, and praise" (Neh. 9:5) His "glorious" name!

In a world that has totally gone mad with reconstructive and plastic surgery to recreate what we don't appreciate about "the look" God gave to us when He created us, Psalm 139 teaches us that the God who is omniscient (139:1-6), omnipresent (139:7-12) and omnipotent (139:13-17)—made us look just like we look... for His purposes! Rather than being all bummed and depressed about how He made us, we need to accept it, get over it, and use our "look" to fulfill His purposes for our lives! It is a wonderfully freeing day when we can thank God for all of the physical "features" that we at one time would have changed if we could!

Psalm 140:1 says, "Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man." The "evil man" is one of the main characters of the Book of Proverbs of which we will go into detail in the coming days. We will see in the doctrinal/prophetic application, the "evil man" is none other than the Antichrist of the Tribulation Period. Note the "singular" reference to the "evil man" and the "violent man" in verse 1, as if the psalmist were referring to just one individual—and yet, notice that the pronoun in verse 2 is plural: "Which imagine mischiefs in THEIR heart." 1 John 2:18 provides us the necessary cross reference to help us understand the psalmist's terminology: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist (singular) shall come, even now are there many antichrists (plural); whereby we know that it is the last time."

As we've seen continuously through the Psalms, at the end of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will have united the nations (UN) in war against the nation of Israel. Notice that 140:2 states: "continually are they gathered together for war"—and then, notice the key word that helps us to set the context appears in verse 3: "Selah." And once again, God reveals that as the nations of the world have united to "wipe Israel off the map," just when Israel looks utterly helpless and hopeless, our Lord Jesus Christ will then return to judge His/their enemies—and establish His rule and rest in His millennial kingdom, as the King of Israel! That context (see it set in verses 3,5 and 8), prevails throughout this entire Psalm, pointing to "that day" when "the upright shall dwell in thy presence" (140:13) on the earth. It's amazing the "doors" that open in the Word of God with just a few simple "keys" of Bible study!

Verse 2 of Psalm 141, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense" has beautiful scriptural ramifications. In the Old Testament Tabernacle, the altar of incense was set just outside the veil where the Lord dwelt in the Holy of Holies. The incense that burned at that altar provided a delightful and beautiful aroma that made its way into the Lord's presence. But make sure you recognize, that Old Testament Tabernacle was actually just a picture (Heb. 8:5)—and when John was caught up to see the "True Tabernacle" in heaven (Heb. 8:2), he wrote in Revelation 5:8: "And when he (the Lord Jesus Christ) had taken the book (the title deed to the earth), the four beasts and four and twenty elders (the church) fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, WHICH ARE THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS!" Oh, may we recognize today, that our prayers are now that beautiful and delightful aroma that arises as incense to become a sweet savor in our Lord's presence! May that incredible reality be just one additional and monumental motivation to cause us to pray more fervently!

In Psalm 142, the historic background and context is set for us in the title: "Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave." (i.e. When Saul was seeking David's life.) This is another great Psalm to use as a guide during those times in our lives...

- When we find ourselves pressed by our "troubles." (142:2)
- When our "spirit is overwhelmed" within us. (142:3a)
- When our enemies have "laid a snare" for us. (142:3b)
- When we feel we've been forsaken by everybody—and nobody "cares." (142:4)
- When we've been "brought very low." (142:6a)
- When we've been "persecuted." (142:6b) And...
- When it feels like our very "soul" is in "prison." (142:9)

It is encouraging to know that David teaches us by his example in this psalm that we can be honest with God about our circumstances of life—and how they've caused us to feel! And there are times in life when pouring our souls out before the Lord in the fashion of Psalm 142 is not only very necessary for us—but also very healthy for us, spiritually speaking. And yet, may we also constantly live with the recognition that there are billions of people who are alive on this planet at this very minute who have no idea that this Psalm, that is so descriptive of their spiritual condition—

even exists! And the reality is, if they knew enough about their spiritual condition to be able to articulate it, sadly, to our shame, they could repeat verse 4 with David, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." Oh, may God use us to be that man or that woman today (and every day!), who will genuinely and passionately care for the souls of the lost, pointing them to the refuge, the mighty cross!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO DELIVERS SOULS FROM PRISON — Psalm 142:7 (Luk. 4:18).

WEEK 28, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: PSALM 144-150

OVERVIEW:

Prayer for rescue and blessing; the Lord extolled for His goodness and greatness; praise for the Lord's help; praise for Jerusalem's restoration and prosperity; the whole universe and all of creation invoked to praise the Lord; Israel invoked to praise the Lord; everything that hath breath invoked to praise the Lord.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Join David today in Psalm 144 in "blessing" and praising the Lord by personalizing His great attributes and power delineated in verses 1 and 2. Notice the psalmist's beautiful repetition of the personal pronoun "MY" in these verses! May we bless the Lord from our hearts today, recognizing that...

He hasn't just "strengthened" us—He IS our "STRENGTH!" (144:1)

He hasn't just made us "good"—He IS our "GOODNESS!" (144:2)

He hasn't just taught us principles of defense against the enemy, He IS our "FORTRESS;" He IS our "HIGH TOWER;" and He IS our "SHIELD!" (144:2) And...

He hasn't just made a way of escape for us—He IS our "DELIVERER!" (144:2)

Oh my, may we allow those blessed personal realities to preach to our souls today!

Based on the realities of how David describes our Lord in 144:1–2, by the time he gets to verse 3, David is essentially saying, "O Lord, in light of WHO YOU ARE... WHO in the world ARE WE?!" (144:3) David cries out, "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!" (I love the exclamation points that God has placed in His perfectly preserved Word! Note that both statements in verse 3 are actually questions, but rather than being followed by question marks, they're followed by exclamation points. So, just what are we to make of that? Perhaps the psalmist understood that in light of God's incredible GREATNESS and man's incredible SINFULNESS, there could never be a suitable answer to the questions, so the QUESTIONS actually become major STATEMENTS of just how incredible, wonderful and awesome God actually is!!!!)

In light of God's unequalled and incomprehensible awesomeness, the Psalm ends with, "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD." Perhaps this verse should cause all of us to ask ourselves: "Am I happy?" If not, maybe we should ask ourselves some penetrating questions about the reality of Christ's "Lordship" in our lives!

May the cry of the psalmist's heart in verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 145 be the genuine cry of our hearts: "I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." A.W. Tozer's (American pastor and author, 1897–1963) surmise of the evangelical church in our day was that "worship" is "the missing jewel" that desperately needs to be "rediscovered." May we allow the glorious words the psalmist uses to lift up his praise and worship to the Lord in verses 3 through 21 become our words today, as we seek to "rediscover the missing jewel!"

Verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 146 are, likewise, great verses to "make our own" as we seek to express to the Lord the total resolve of our hearts to praise Him—not just for the remainder of our time on earth, but for all eternity: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." (146:1–2)

Psalm 147:1 reminds us of the reason we praise the Lord: "for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely (or beautiful)."

Psalm 148 teaches us about the three "heavens" (148:1 c.f. 2 Cor. 12:2) from which our praise is to burst forth.

- The **first "heaven"** is from the earth to the clouds. (148:7–14)
It's where birds and airplanes fly—what we call the earth's atmosphere.
- The **second "heaven"** is that which is above the clouds to the "frozen face of the deep" (Job 38:30) that is billions and billions of miles above our heads. (148:3–6) It's what we call outer space.
- The **third "heaven"** is the abode of God, above the "frozen face of the deep." (148:1–2)
This is what John saw in Rev. 4:6 when he said, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal."

The point of Psalm 148 is that praise is to jubilantly be declared from every place in the entire universe!

And how incredible is the glorious simplicity of the psalmist's exhortation to those of us who have been "beautified" with the precious gift of "salvation" (149:4), that, as His "saints" (149:5a)—we make certain of two vital things! (149:5–6) First, that from a "joyful" heart that is bent on giving our Lord "glory"—we "let the high praises of God be in [our] mouth!" (149:6a) And secondly, that while we offer Him that praise, we have "a two-edged sword in [our] hand!" (149:6b. Also see Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15; Eph. 6:17) As we live in pursuit of God today (and everyday!), may those two simple admonitions help us to concise our objective!

Could there be a more glorious way to end the Book of Psalms than with the psalmist's words in Psalm 150? The psalmist exhorts us to "praise the Lord" (150:1)... in the place where He dwells (i.e. in His presence," or "in His sanctuary")—and in all places that His presence and power are found ("In the firmament of His power"), which is to say... everywhere! (150:1) Notice also in verse 2, that we are to praise Him for all that He DOES ("His mighty acts"), which proceed out of all that He IS! ("His excellent greatness") And notice in verses 3–5, that we are to praise Him with any and all musical instruments in existence, but most importantly, with the instrument of our mouth!

The Book of Psalms ends with this final admonition: "Praise ye the Lord." (150:6) To coin a phrase, may we "Just do it!"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND — Psalm 146:8 (Mat. 9:27–30; Mar. 10:46–53; Joh. 9:1–41).

WEEK 28, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 1-4

OVERVIEW:

The purpose for the Book of Proverbs; the enticement of sinners; the need for wisdom; the prerequisites for obtaining wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; the power of wisdom and knowledge to protect from the "evil man" and the "strange woman;" the rewards of wisdom; the instruction of a father.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Proverbs is the revelation of wisdom from "the son of David, king of Israel." (1:1) As that identification is made, it is imperative that we keep in mind the three applications of Scripture. (For a review of them, please refer to "Highlights and Insights" in WEEK 25, DAY 5.)

THE HISTORICAL APPLICATION

From an historical standpoint, the Book of Proverbs is the impartation of Solomon's wisdom, the king of Israel, to his son, Rehoboam. (Note, the phrase "My son" is found as Solomon's paragrammatical "lead in" 23 times in this Book.) It is a Book written to a king's son to teach him how to rule in a kingdom, as he employs the practical principles of life and leadership that flow out of understanding the difference between...

- The WISE (wisdom) and the FOOL (foolishness).
- What is RIGHT and what is WRONG,
- The "GODLY MAN" vs. the "EVIL MAN."
- The "VIRTUOUS WOMAN" vs. a "STRANGE WOMAN."

THE DOCTRINAL/PROPHETIC APPLICATION

From a doctrinal/prophetic standpoint, the Book of Proverbs is the revealing of wisdom to the nation of Israel during the Tribulation Period. (Note how God identifies Israel in Exodus 4:22: "Israel is MY SON!") Proverbs is a Book written by Israel's king to warn them against the Antichrist ("THE" personification of the "evil man!") and the "fornicating" bed of false religion ("THE" doctrinal application of the "strange woman!") that will be so seductive during that time period. (More will be said about this identification of the "evil man" and "strange woman" below.)

THE DEVOTIONAL/INSPIRATIONAL APPLICATION

From a devotional/inspirational standpoint, the Book of Proverbs is the revelation of wisdom from Israel's true King — the "King of kings," the "Son of David," the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31) He writes to all who have been made His "sons!" (Joh. 1:12; 1 Joh. 3:1) It is a Book written to teach a young man both how to live and to lead in a kingdom — the first "kingdom" being the "kingdom" of his own LIFE! He must first learn how to rule his own heart, mind, emotions, passions and desires. When he has applied the wisdom of his King to that first "kingdom," a young man is then ready to take on the responsibility of marriage, and bringing up children. After learning to "rule well" in the "kingdom" of his HOME (1 Tim. 3:4), he is then ready to take on the responsibility of applying the wisdom of his King in the "kingdom," as it were, of the CHURCH. (1 Tim. 5:17)

Because he has applied the wisdom of His King revealed through Proverbs, he has learned how to rule in his spirit over the pitfalls men fall into that "disqualify" them from ruling in their homes and in the church:

The love of self. (2 Tim. 3:2)

The love of pleasure. (2 Tim. 3:4 – i.e. self-gratification, seduction of the "strange woman," etc.)

The love of money. (1 Tim. 6:10)

The love of this present world. (2 Tim. 4:10)

At the same time a young man is learning to apply the wisdom of His King to the "kingdom" of his life and all subsequent kingdoms, if a young lady will likewise apply the wisdom of her King to her life, allowing Him to develop in her the character of a "virtuous woman," the two will inevitably, in God's sovereignty and wisdom, find each other. The godly young man will recognize the character of the woman to whom he should offer the proposal of marriage, and the godly young woman will recognize the character of the one to whom she should accept the proposal of marriage. He would be perfectly suited to fulfill his role of representing the Lord Jesus Christ (the "godly man") in the home (Eph. 5:25), and she would be perfectly suited to fulfill her role of representing the church (the "virtuous woman") in the home. (Eph. 5:24) As the home's "keeper" (Titus 2:5) or "guardian" (Pro. 31:27 – "looketh well" = "watchman"), she would be reporting to her husband the things that she sees that might put the "kingdom" of the home in jeopardy. As the home's "head" (Eph. 5:23), he would be poised to make the decisions that would provide spiritual security and safety in the home.

In a very practical application, it is interesting to observe the connection of the 31 chapters of the Book of Proverbs to the days of a month. Most months consist of 31 days. Because of the importance of the subject matter and purposes of the Book of Proverbs, many have found it a great spiritual discipline and habit to read the Book of Proverbs through each month, reading the chapter that coincides with the day of the month.

In the first four verses (1:1–4), God lets us know that the Book of Proverbs was actually designed to accomplish nine specific things:

1. To know wisdom and instruction. (1:2a)
2. To perceive the words of understanding. (1:2b)
3. To receive the instruction of wisdom. (1:3a)
4. To receive the instruction of justice. (1:3b)
5. To receive the instruction of judgment. (1:3c)
6. To receive the instruction of equity. (1:3d)
7. To give subtlety to the simple. (1:4a)
8. To give the young man knowledge. (1:4b)
9. To give the young man discretion. (1:4c)

The number nine in the Bible is the number of "fruit-bearing." We might could say that Jesus wrote this Book of the Bible to us to teach us how to have a fruitful life!

We look at the gangs that threaten safety in every major city (and in many not-so-major cities!) around the world and wonder how could society have so degenerated to such extreme and senseless violence. What Solomon reveals to us in 1:10–19 is that it is really nothing new! These verses reveal that there is something within our depravity that finds such behavior appealing and "enticing," and will be a part of any culture where children grow up with no "fear of the Lord" (1:7), and do not "hear the instruction of their fathers, and forsake the law of their mothers." (1:8)

For those who become frustrated because you can't always make heads or tails out of what you read in the Bible, take heart! Trust God's promise in 1:23 — "I will pour out my spirit unto you, and I will make known my words unto you!" (1 Cor. 2:9–13)

Note also the related promise in chapter 2 and verse 6, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." But do notice, however, that there are five verses in chapter 2 preceding the promise of verse 6! Solomon reveals that there are actually seven prerequisites to receiving God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

1. We must RECEIVE His WORDS. (2:1a)
2. We must HIDE His COMMANDMENTS with us. (2:1b)
3. We must INCLINE OUR EAR unto WISDOM. (2:2a)
4. We must APPLY OUR HEART to UNDERSTANDING. (2:2b)
5. We must CRY OUT for KNOWLEDGE. (2:3a)
6. We must LIFT UP OUR VOICE for understanding. (2:3b)
7. We must SEEK and SEARCH for God's WISDOM as we would for silver and hid treasure. (2:4)

Notice the very next word in verse 5: "THEN!" After those seven prerequisites are fulfilled, "THEN" verse 6 will be a reality! The fact is, people don't know God's Word, and thus, do not receive His wisdom, understanding and knowledge (2:6), for the simple fact that they don't really want it. God is basically saying to us through these seven prerequisites — "You gotta want it!"

And notice, when we really do want it, and we, thereby, "receive" it — it provides us an internal defense mechanism against sin! (2:10–22) Solomon says, "Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee (2:11), to deliver thee from the way of the evil man (2:12)... to deliver thee from the strange woman!" (2:16) Wow! Those are some incredible benefits!

The "evil man" and the "strange woman" are key characters in the Book of Proverbs — and in life! And again, keeping in mind the three applications of Scripture — in an historical and devotional sense, every culture has "evil men" who speak "froward" (perverse) things (2:12), and love to do evil and to pull others into their wicked ways. (2:14) But note, God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge is what "preserves" us and "keeps" us (2:11) from these "ways of darkness" (2:13), and "the frowardness of the wicked." (2:14) Every culture also has "strange women" — women we refer to today as seductive, loose, or whorish, who seek to lure and allure men sexually. And again, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge is what "preserves" us and "keeps" us (2:11) from her enticements and entrapments.

From a doctrinal or prophetic standpoint, the "evil man" refers to those in whom the "spirit of antichrist" dwells — which is the personification of the very devil himself. They are found in every culture, and yet will ultimately be represented in "THE Antichrist" (Satan in a human body — 1 Joh. 2:18), "THE evil man!" The "strange woman" in a doctrinal or prophetic sense, refers to the "harlotrous" false religious systems of the world that seduce men (mankind) into her bed and hold them there. (2:19)

The "evil man" and the "strange woman" are to be avoided in a very practical or devotional sense because they make people's lives a "living hell!" The "evil man" and the "strange woman" are to be avoided in a doctrinal or prophetic sense because they send people to a literal, "eternal hell!"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the SON OF DAVID; ISRAEL'S WISE KING — Proverbs 1:1 (Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 20:30–31).

As the CREATOR WHO FOUNDED THE EARTH — Proverbs 3:19 (Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2–3)

As the TEACHER OF WISDOM — Proverbs 4:7,11 (Col. 2:3).

WEEK 28, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 5-8

OVERVIEW:

The dangers and pitfalls of sexual immorality; the father's counsel to his son; the wiles of the strange woman; the blessing of wisdom, understanding and truth.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The four powerful chapters in today's reading reveal how God has provided wisdom and understanding to preserve the purity of a person's God-given sexual desires. God's Word reveals to us that these desires are actually holy, if they are reserved to be fulfilled in the chamber of a covenant marriage bed that is undefiled. (Heb. 13:4)

We must be astronomically aware in every phase of life that the enemy of all righteousness will do anything and everything within his power to destroy our personal purity by seeking to tempt us to satisfy our sexual desires in the heat of passionate compromise, so that he may, thereby, not only defile the body of Christ, but contaminate communities, and ultimately, condemn entire countries by invoking God's judgment upon them.

The person who is predisposed to do the right thing in terms of their moral purity is one who has predetermined to "keep (protect, guard) his heart with all diligence" (4:23), so as not to be lured away from his surrender to Christ's Lordship. Understanding the benefits of wisdom is a major part of that process, as we also learned in chapter 4. We must, first, attentively "hear" the father's instruction so we can understand his doctrine (teaching), so we can, then, purpose in our hearts not to forsake the instruction we have been given.

Chapter 5 opens with the father passionately admonishing his son to "attend," or to pay close attention to his wisdom, understanding and knowledge so he will have the spiritual fortitude that will protect him from falling for the sexual allurements and enticements of the "strange woman." The father warns that her words will be enticingly sweet, and that her smooth seductive mouth will be inviting. (5:3) He admonishes his son to look beyond the momentary pleasure connected to her, to where it will ultimately leave him: in a big pile of bitterness, shredded to pieces by her two-edged sword, having experienced corruption and death in every part of life that really matters, and having had his entire life turned into a living hell. (5:4-5)

The father's advice is to do whatever we need to do to get as far away from her as we possibly can, before she causes...

1. Our honor to be given to others. (5:9a)
2. Our years to be given to the cruel. (5:9b)
3. Strangers to control our money. (5:10a)
4. The things we've worked for to be given to strangers. (5:10b)
5. Our health to be vanquished. (5:11)
6. Cycles of regret and depression to haunt us for the rest of our life. (5:12-14)
7. God's plan of experiencing the pure, fulfilling love of our life-mate to be obliterated. (5:15-19)
8. The future development of sexual addictions. (5:22)
9. The potential we once held in life to be forever forfeited. (5:23)

All of these losses progressively lead to the warning of idleness (often referred to as "the devil's workshop!") and deceit in chapter 6. Notice that the culminating sum of disregard to these warnings is sudden calamity and

irreparable brokenness. (6:15) In the devotional or inspirational application, this man Solomon is describing ("A' man of sin") is characterized in 6:17–19 by six things that the Lord "hates," the seventh actually being an "abomination" to Him. In the doctrinal or prophetic application, however, the man Solomon is describing is none other than "THE man of sin" (2 Thes. 2:3), the very Antichrist, himself. The seven characteristics include...

1. A proud look. (6:17a)
2. A lying tongue. (6:17b)
3. Hands that shed innocent blood. (6:17c)
4. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations. (6:18a)
5. Feet that are swift to run into mischief. (6:18b)
6. A false witness that speaketh lies. (6:19a)
7. Sowing discord among the brethren. (6:19b)

Solomon has certainly provided incredible information and advice to help young men to avoid the pitfalls and disasters associated with the "strange woman," and yet He reserves some of the clearest, simplest and best advice in 6:20–24... just simply obey your father and mother! (Eph. 6:1–2)

Note also in 6:25 that Solomon, the son of David, makes clear that the allurements of the "strange woman" isn't, first and foremost, a BODY issue— but a HEART issue! The adultery begins in the HEART through "lust," and then, simply finds its expression in the BODY through the act. No wonder our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David, said, in Matthew 5:28: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart!"

Chapter 7 continues with the admonition to keep the father's words and commandments to guard against the lure of sensual and sexual involvement so prevalent in every generation. Solomon warns that it is the young man who is "simple," which is defined in this same verse as one who is "void of understanding," who is easy prey for the "strange woman," especially when his curiosity lures him into her neighborhood! (7:8) And thus the old saying, "Curiosity killed the cat!" And buddy, it will kill this "cool cat" also! Being "cool" is often just being "stupid!" (If I may interject a loose paraphrase here... "There is none cool, no, not one!" And every young man would do well to recognize that!)

As Solomon describes the "strange woman," it becomes apparent that the ones she catches in her snare — are actually those who are wanting to be caught! Sure, there's seduction involved, but Solomon lets us know that any man could see her coming from a mile away, just by the way she was dressed — or in most cases, how she is undressed! (7:10) But Solomon lets us know that she also possesses three other unmistakable characteristics in 7:11: 1) She is LOUD. 2) She is STUBBORN. 3) She doesn't like to STAY HOME. These three traits should be a major caution to every young man who finds himself being attracted to a young lady possessing any of them, and should cause every young lady to do some major introspection to determine whether any of these characteristics have begun to surface in her life! Culturally, there is a temptation for teenage girls to possess these characteristics in order to gain acceptance with her peers, but it is an absolutely disastrous path to be on! Parents, recognize that we are not just bringing up SONS — we are bringing up someone's HUSBAND and someone's FATHER! And we aren't just bringing up DAUGHTERS — we are bringing up someone's WIFE and someone's MOTHER! The stakes are incredibly high, and sexual sin is so costly! (1 Cor. 6:18–19)

And notice in 7:15–18, that ironically enough, what this "strange woman" does would be totally appropriate if this preparation was done in anticipation of spending this time presenting herself to her husband. It actually fits perfectly in the context of the Song of Solomon!

The opening theme in chapter 8 is three-fold: wisdom, understanding, and truth. Note that in 8:15–21, Solomon personifies these traits into one "individual," as it were — declaring that, "By ME...

1. Kings reign."
2. Princes decree justice."
3. Princes rule."
4. Nobles rule."
5. All the judges of the earth rule."
6. Are all riches and honor."
7. Is leadership found into the way of righteousness."

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the CREATOR WHO prepared the heavens — Proverbs 8:27–31 (Heb. 1:10; Joh. 1:3).