

## Worship in the Psalms



### SABBATH—AUGUST 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Psalm 20:3; Psalm 49; Psalm 54:6; Psalm 73; Psalm 78:1–8; Psalm 90:1, 2; Psalm 100:1–5; Psalm 141:2.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Lord who rules over all, how lovely is the place where you live! I long [desire] to be in the courtyards of the Lord’s temple. I deeply long to be there. My whole being [person] cries out for the living God” (Psalm 84:1, 2, NlrV).

**THE HEBREW WORD TRANSLATED AS “PSALMS” COMES FROM A ROOT WORD THAT MEANS “TO SING WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.”** So, the Psalms were songs that were an important part of the worship of Israel. We have the lyrics (the words of the Psalms themselves). But we do not have the music. How interesting it would be to hear these songs sung in Hebrew.

The Psalms themselves are rich and deep. They cover a wide range of topics and emotions (deep feelings). They deal with everything from the national history of Israel to the songwriter’s most intimate and personal pain. The Psalms speak to us because we are part of the long history that goes back to Israel. We also have our own private pain. We can all relate at some time or another to some of the suffering described in the Psalms. At the same time, it is important that we reach out to claim the hope shown in them.

This week we will study the Psalms and some of the themes found in them. We will learn how these themes relate to the question of worship and what that means for us today.

**SUNDAY—AUGUST 7****WORSHIP THE LORD, OUR  
MAKER (Psalm 90:1, 2)**

The Psalms of praise describe who God is and why He is worthy of worship. They announce His greatness, and call worshipers to come honor Him joyfully.

**What do the examples in Psalm 90:1, 2; Psalm 95:1–6; and Psalm 100:1–5 have in common?**

**Psalm 19 is another song in praise of God as Creator. What is its important message? Why is this so necessary for us today?**

**Notice how the writer of these psalms suddenly changes from talking about God’s glory in the heavens to His Written Word (the Bible). This sudden shift (change) was done on purpose. What great truth is the writer of Psalms trying to teach? Read John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16, 17; and Hebrews 1:1–3 to help you to form your answer.**

The same God who spoke the world into being also gave spiritual, physical, and social laws to govern the human family. The Old Testament clearly names God as both the Creator of the world and the Giver of the written Law. The New Testament writers believe that Jesus Christ is the Creator and the Giver of the Law. They also believe

that He is the Word made flesh, who lived among His people in order to show the Father to them and to die as their Substitute.<sup>1</sup> So, He alone is worthy of praise and worship.

So, we find in the Psalms one of the basic principles (important rules) of worship as seen in the first angel’s message (Revelation 14:7). We worship the Lord because He is our Creator. Directly tied to His work as Creator is His work as our Redeemer<sup>2</sup> (Revelation 14:6). Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer. Are these enough reasons for us to praise and worship Him? If not, what are?

**How can you get to know the Lord better through His created works?**

**MONDAY—AUGUST 8****JUDGMENT FROM HIS  
SANCTUARY (Psalm 73)**

Many psalms were written for public worship. Many others are prayers of personal pain and suffering. These sad songs usually give a description of the problem, the sufferer’s plea for help, and a positive note of the writer’s trust in God. But in Psalm 73, the speaker of the song is angry that the wicked seem successful and comfortable while he suffers injustice.

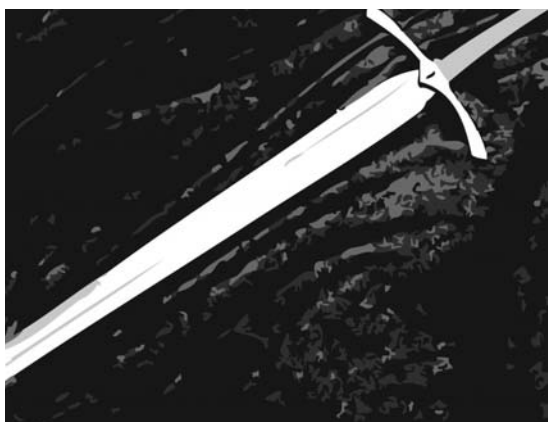
**Read the psalmist’s complaint in Psalm 73. What happened that**

1. Substitute—someone who takes the place of another person; in this case, Jesus took our place on the cross.

2. Redeemer—the person who saves us by paying the price for our sins through His death on the cross. In this case, our Redeemer is Jesus Christ.

**brought about a change in his attitude (feeling) toward the problem? What message can we learn from this for ourselves, as Seventh-day Adventists? Keep in mind our understanding of Christ's ministry (work) in the heavenly sanctuary<sup>3</sup> and the plan of salvation. Read Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 25, 26.**

Judgment in the Psalms, as in the Bible as a whole, is a two-edged sword: (1) a deserved punishment for the wicked and (2) the defense of the suffering and humble (Psalm 7:9, 10; Psalm 9:7–12; Psalm 75:2; Psalm 94:1–3, 20–22; Psalm 98:9). In Psalm 68:24, the wicked are watching God enter the sanctuary in a grand march. God's throne represents justice and mercy. The ark of the covenant (agreement) symbolizes (stands for) God's throne in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. So, the sanctuary, the place of worship, becomes a haven<sup>4</sup> for the people who suffer and are troubled.



**Judgment is a two-edged sword: it is meant to (1) punish the wicked and (2) defend those who suffer.**

Here, too, we find the theme of judgment that is also described in the first angel's message: "In a loud voice he said, 'Have respect for God. Give him glory. The hour has come for God to judge' " (Revelation 14:7, NIV). One of the things that makes God so worthy of our worship is that we can trust Him. In the end, judgment will come, and it will be just and righteous (holy). It will not be the same as the imperfect justice given even in the best human courts. There have been terrible crimes—from the murder of Abel (Genesis 4:10) to the many horrible crimes today. This unfairness will continue until the last day of human history. But the good news is that we can trust that God will make all things right in the end, even though it may be hard for us to know now how He will do it (read 1 Corinthians 4:5).

**Have you witnessed injustice? Have you been the helpless victim of injustice? How can you learn to trust in God? How can you learn to trust in His promise that one day there will be full justice?**



**One of the things that makes God so worthy of our worship is that we can trust Him.**

3. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

4. haven—a place of protection and safety.

**TUESDAY—AUGUST 9****“LIKE THE BEASTS [ANIMALS] THAT PERISH [DIE]” (Psalm 49)**

Yesterday’s study showed that there is a lot of unfairness and injustice in this world. A rather small group of people is rich. A great many more people struggle hard to make a living. The gap (separation) between the rich and poor seems to grow wider and wider. What makes it worse is that so often the rich get richer by taking advantage of the poor. All through the Bible the Lord has warned about this injustice. Those who are guilty of doing this and who do not repent<sup>5</sup> will have a lot to answer for on judgment day.

**How does Psalm 49 tie in with what we read yesterday? What is the basic message of this psalm? Where do we find the gospel here? What final hope is given?**

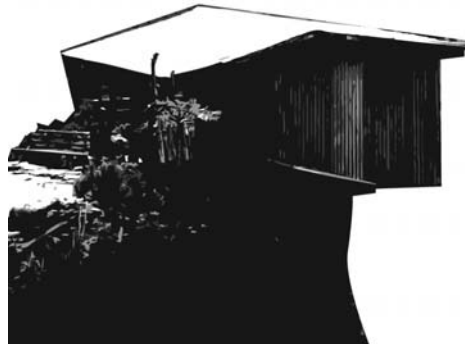
It is so easy to get busy with things in this world. This is true when you have many things in this world as the rich do. But, as the psalm says, the things of this world last only a short time and get lost easily. Overnight, everything you have worked for, everything that you have worked to gain, everything that is important to you, can be taken away, lost, destroyed. We all live on a “cliff” that is ready to fall into the “sea” at any time. Fortunately, as this psalm and the Bible show, this life is not everything. We have hope for a better future.

5. repent—to say that you are sorry for sinning and to turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit.

6. incense—sweet-smelling perfume given off by certain spices when burned. The smoke and the sweet smell of the incense represent the prayers of God’s people rising to Him in heaven.

**Study Psalm 49:7–9. What are these verses saying? How do these verses show how all of us, rich or poor, are fully dependent upon Christ for salvation?**

**Do you ever find yourself jealous of those who are richer than you are? If so, why is it important to surrender those feelings to the Lord? Why are such emotions not good for your spiritual life? Why are they bad for your relationship with God and for your faith, in general? How can staying close to Jesus and believing in what was done at the cross and in salvation help to free you from the slavery of jealousy?**



We all live on a “cliff” that is ready to fall into the “sea” at any time.

**WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 10****WORSHIP AND THE SANCTUARY (GOD’S HOUSE) (Psalm 141:2)**

**“May my prayer come to you like the sweet smell of incense.<sup>6</sup> When I lift up my hands in prayer, may**

it be like the evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2, NIV). What symbol is being used here? What is this verse pointing to?

The entire Old Testament sanctuary service<sup>7</sup> was based on the idea of sacrifice. The real purpose of the sacrificial system<sup>8</sup> was to point to how Jesus died for all people. It was to show how useless our works were to save us. It was to show that the cost of sin was the life of a victim who was not guilty of the crimes He was punished for. It was to show that the Lord had a plan through which sinners could be forgiven, cleansed, and accepted by God through His grace.<sup>9</sup>

It is no surprise that many of the Psalms, so important to Israel’s worship, would use symbols and examples from the sanctuary service. For example, read Psalm 20:3; Psalm 43:4; Psalm 51:19; Psalm 54:6; Psalm 118:27; Psalm 134:2; and Psalm 141:2.

**Think about the sanctuary service: the sacrifice of the animals, the ministry of the priests, the furniture in the courtyard, and the Holy and Most Holy Places. What important truths can we learn from this earthly and temporary system about the work**

**that Jesus did for our sake? Why should these truths be so important to our worship of the Lord?**

**Read Psalm 40:6–8 and Hebrews 10:1–13. How does Paul connect Psalm 40:8 with the sacrificial system in Hebrews 10:1–13?**

Paul’s point is that it is through Christ that we have salvation. It is not through the death of animals. Only through Christ is there true forgiveness of sin. The whole earthly system was merely an example of what Jesus would do for the sake of all people. Paul was telling the Jews who believed in Jesus that they needed to turn their attention away from the earthly system. Instead, they should fix their attention and worship on Jesus. In other words, the whole sanctuary service was to point to Christ. But the Jews needed to, as believers, move away from the symbols and toward what they really stood for. What was real was Jesus and His work for them in the heavenly sanctuary after His death that made forgiveness available for all people.

**How can we make sure that every part of our worship points us toward Jesus and His work for our sake?**

7. sanctuary service—the offering of animal blood as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner’s blood. This service represented Jesus’ dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this service was not needed.

8. sacrificial system—in the Jewish sanctuary (house of worship) service animals were sacrificed as a symbol to show that the people of Israel received forgiveness for sins. This service helped point people to the future sacrifice (death) of Jesus on the cross for their sins.

9. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.





The whole sanctuary service was to point to Christ.

## THURSDAY—AUGUST 11

### LEST WE FORGET! (Psalm 78:1–8)

Three of the longer Psalms—Psalms 78, 105, and 106—are great hymns that were sung to remind Israel of God’s leading in the past.

**According to Psalm 78:1–8, why does God want the people to remember their history? Read also Deuteronomy 6:6–9 and 1 Corinthians 10:11. How can we take that same principle (important rule) and use it for ourselves in our own experience, which is so different from theirs?**

One of the ways that God shows Himself is through history. But each generation must experience Him anew based on that history. For that reason, both music and the preaching of the Word of God in worship are important in order to remind both old and new generations of God’s past leading. Psalm 78 is a warning that history must not repeat itself. At

the same time, it is a heartwarming reminder of God’s merciful dealings with His backsliding (falling back into sin) people. “Tell them about what the Lord has done that is worthy of praise. . . . Talk about his power” (verse 4, Nlrv). Psalm 105:2 calls us to “*Sing* to him” and “*Tell* about all of the wonderful things he has done” (Nlrv; emphasis added).

The longest poem in the book of Psalms, Psalm 119, uses this phrase over and over, “Teach me thy statutes [commands].” The number of times it is used shows how important the Bible is for teaching godly and right living. Paul repeats this thought when he advises the young preacher Timothy, “God has breathed life into all of Scripture [the Bible]. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16, Nlrv).

Paul commands Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2, Nlrv). To fail in preaching the Word in worship is to weaken the power of the gospel to reach hearts, to change lives, and to make richer the worship experience of believers.

**How often have you experienced the Lord doing something wonderful in your life? And how quickly did you forget it and become afraid to show your faith when a new crisis arose? Whether in church worship or in your own private worship, how can you learn to keep fresh in your mind God’s leading in your life? Why is this important?**

## FRIDAY—AUGUST 12

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pages 44–51, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*;<sup>10</sup> “Poetry and Song,” pages 159–168, in *Education*; “Forgetfulness,” pages 107–115, in *Testimonies*<sup>11</sup> for the Church, volume 8.

“The Book of Psalms holds a special place in the Bible. . . . [The Psalms] act in the Bible as the heartbeat of Israel’s religion. In this book of prayers, God’s people found their stairway to heaven. It reaches from the lowest depths of human suffering to the highest joys of worshiping God. In these songs, we find both cries of discouragement and hopelessness and hymns of thanksgiving and praise. . . . This living relationship [connection] between man and God is perhaps the deeper reason why the Book of Psalms has been held dear as a valuable jewel in the Hebrew Bible by true believers of God throughout history.” Further, the Psalms “tell of God’s own heart. . . . They stand as inspired [God-given] examples of how God wants us all to accept by faith everything about Himself and about His actions in the books of Moses.”—Adapted from Hans K. LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: First Impressions, 1983), pages 3, 4.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- ① It is one thing to trust in the justice

of God’s final judgment at the end of time. We have to trust in that hope and promise. But at the same time, does this mean that we do not have to work for justice and judgment now because we know that it will come by God in the end? How do we keep a right balance between trying to have justice now and knowing that one day it will come?

- ② Discuss more the question at the end of Wednesday’s study about worship and the kinds of worship in church. How is it possible that things such as music, preaching, church services, and so forth could become goals in themselves instead of pointing us toward the Lord? So often we can allow the symbols to take the place of the real things that the symbols represent. How can we protect ourselves against this danger in our own worship services?

- ③ How could your own church worship service be improved to make sure that you fix your thoughts on Christ in all parts of worship?

- ④ What are some of your own favorite psalms? What do you like about them? What do they show you about the Lord?

- ⑤ If your church does not sing any psalms in worship, ask a musician to write music for a psalm that could be sung for worship.

10. Patriarchs and Prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.

11. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.