



YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

**PSALMS: THE HYMNAL
OF ISRAEL
BOOK I**

BOB UTLEY
PROFESSOR OF HERMENEUTICS
(BIBLE INTERPRETATION)

STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES
OLD TESTAMENT, VOL. 9B

BIBLE LESSONS INTERNATIONAL
MARSHALL, TEXAS
2012

www.BibleLessonsIntl.com
www.freebiblecommentary.org

Copyright ©2012 by Bible Lessons International, Marshall, Texas
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any way or by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Bible Lessons International
P. O. Box 1289
Marshall, TX 75671-1289
1-800-785-1005

ISBN 978-1-892691-37-8

The primary biblical text used in this commentary is:
New American Standard Bible (Update, 1995)
Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by
The Lockman Foundation
P. O. Box 2279
La Habra, CA 90632-2279

The paragraph divisions and summary captions as well as selected phrases are from:

1. The New King James Version, Copyright ©1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
2. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyright ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. Today's English Version is used by permission of the copyright owner, The American Bible Society, ©1966, 1971. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
4. The New Jerusalem Bible, copyright ©1990 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. and Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

www.freebiblecommentary.org

The New American Standard Bible Update — 1995

Easier to read:

- ▣ Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “and” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:

- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Explanation of the Technical Resources Used in the “You Can Understand the Bible” Commentary Series	i
Brief Definitions of Hebrew Grammatical Forms which Impact Exegesis	iii
Abbreviations Used in This Commentary	ix
A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You	xi
A Guide To Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search for Verifiable Truth	xiii
Introduction to Hebrew Poetry	xxi
Introduction to Wisdom Literature	xxv
Introduction to the Psalms	1
Book One (Psalm 1-41)	
Psalm 1	9
Psalm 2	25
Psalm 3	39
Psalm 4	43
Psalm 5	51
Psalm 6	59
Psalm 7	63
Psalm 8	73
Psalm 9	81
Psalm 10	93
Psalm 11	99
Psalm 12	107
Psalm 13	117
Psalm 14	121
Psalm 15	127
Psalm 16	131
Psalm 17	137
Psalm 18	143
Psalm 19	159
Psalm 20	169
Psalm 21	177
Psalm 22	183
Psalm 23	195

Psalm 24	201
Psalm 25	207
Psalm 26	217
Psalm 27	225
Psalm 28	233
Psalm 29	239
Psalm 30	247
Psalm 31	255
Psalm 32	263
Psalm 33	269
Psalm 34	275
Psalm 35	283
Psalm 36	291
Psalm 37	297
Psalm 38	311
Psalm 39	319
Psalm 40	325
Psalm 41	333
Appendix: Doctrinal Statement	339

SPECIAL TOPICS TABLE OF CONTENTS

Names for Deity, 1:1	12
Terms For God’s Revelation, 1:2	15
Righteousness, 1:5	18
Know, 1:6	21
Where Are the Dead?, 1:6	22
Bob’s Evangelical Biases, Contextual Insights, D	26
Land, Country, Earth, 2:2	27
Messiah, 2:2	28
OT Titles of the Special Coming One, 2:2	28
God Described as Human, 2:4-6	30
Heaven(s), 2:4	31
The Heavens, 2:4	31
The Son of God, 2:7-9	32
Monotheism, 2:7	34
Salvation (OT), 3:7	41
Heart, 4:7	46
Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol and Alcoholism, 4:7	47
Lovingkindness (<i>hesed</i>), 5:7	53
Shadow As a Metaphor For Protection and Care, 5:11-12	55
The Name of YHWH,	56
Lions in the OT, 7:2	64
Hand, 7:3-5	65
Repentance in the OT, 7:12	68
Perseverance, 7:12	69
Moon Worship, 8:3	76
Wonderful Things, 9:1	83
Forever (<i>'olam</i>), 9:5	84
The Two Books of God, 9:5	86
Judge, Justice, Judgment, 9:7-8	88
Characteristics of Israel’s God, 9:10b	89
God Tests His People, 11:4b-5a	101
That Day, 11:4b-5	102
Fire, 11:6b	103
Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the OT, 12:1	108
Symbolic Numbers in Scripture, 12:7	113
Abomination, 14:1	122
Israel (the name), 14:7	124
Saints, 16:3	131

<i>Cherubim</i> , 18:10	148
Blameless, Innocent, Guiltless, without Reproach, 18:20-24	150
Glory, 19:1	161
Inspiration, 19:7-9	163
Ransom/Redeem, 19:14	165
Day (<i>Yom</i>), 20:1	170
Boasting, 20:7	174
Empty, Vain, False, Nothingness (BDB 996), 24:4	204
Covenant, 25:10	211
Election/Predestination and the Need For a Theological Balance, 25:12	213
Resurrection, Psalm 26 Contextual Insights	218
Apostasy, 26:8-12	220
The Sons of God (Genesis 6).	240
Is Healing God’s Plan for Every Age, 30:2	248
What Is “Sin Unto Death,” 30:5	250
Grieving Rites, 30:11	253
Breath, Wind, Spirit, 31:5	258
The Angel of the Lord, 34:7	278
OT Predictions of the Future vs. NT Predictions, Psalm 37 Contextual Insights	298
Satan, 38:20	316
Cubit, 39:5	321
Amen, 41:13	336

Brief Explanations of the Technical Resources Used in this Old Testament Commentary Series

I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on _____.”

III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings are not applicable)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-Semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
3. The Nash papyrus (Decalog)
4. The Severus scroll (Pentateuch)
5. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D.

900's) see "The Reliability of the Old Testament Text" by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are

- 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
- 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
- 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
- 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
- 5. Maccabean coins and seals
- 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
- 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

II. Aspects of Predication

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—SINGULAR, PLURAL, DUAL
2. gender—MASCULINE and FEMININE (no NEUTER)
3. mood—INDICATIVE, SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)

- a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it this way:

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as one which

“views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
 - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
 - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
 3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
 4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
 5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
 6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
 7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal - Niphal*; *Piel - Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning.

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that

particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, ‘tense’ shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew’s mind.

The name ‘tenses’ as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew ‘tenses’ do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. MOODS (Modes)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), FIRST PERSON IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), THIRD PERSON IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

D. *Waw* – Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre.

The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE – There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . . as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by PREPOSITIONS, POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS, and the CONSTRUCT relationship” (p. 91).

J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the CONSTRUCT state as:

“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* – does not expect a response
 - b. *halo'* – the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo'*.
3. The term *'al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.

4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
 - c. something which is possible or even probable (THIRD CLASS)
 - d. something which is less probable; therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
 - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
 - c. the more probable condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
 - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts by James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks, and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
 East Texas Baptist University
 June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

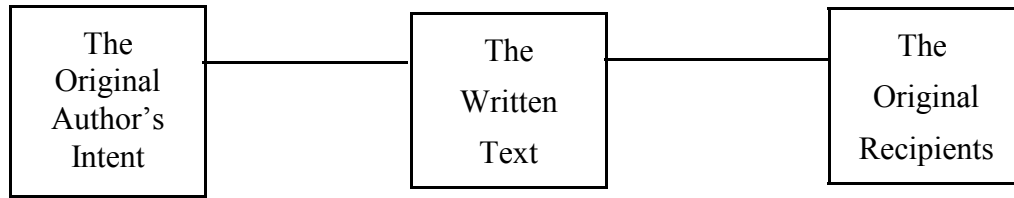
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 6. the words chosen to present the message
 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

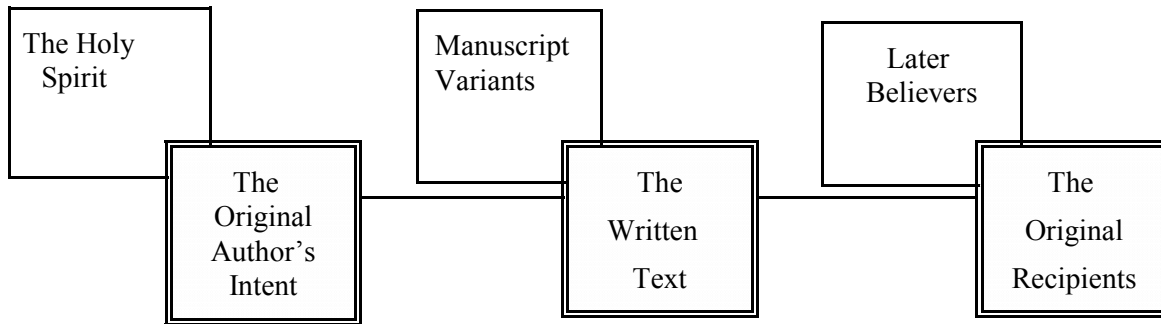
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events

3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.

D. The fourth reading cycle

1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopaedias, handbooks, and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than

intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:

1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
4. Today’s English Version (TEV)
5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 1. literary context
 2. historical, cultural insights
 3. grammatical information
 4. word studies
 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.

4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. There are no accented lines or rhyme in Near East poetry (but there is a beat).
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written, not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp. 965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous – the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical – the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic – the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic – a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
- B. A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
 - 1. emblematic – one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3.

2. climacteric or stair-like – the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22.
 3. introverted – a series of clauses, usually at least four, is related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3, Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915) developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance — where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two — Ps. 83:14 and Isa. 1:3
 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length, Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which denotes an odd number of parallel lines forming an hourglass shape whereby the central line is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Pro. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
 4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 6. special opening and closing (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:
1. dedication songs – Num. 21:17-18
 2. work songs – (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 3. ballads – Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 4. drinking songs – negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
 5. love poems – Song of Songs, wedding riddle – Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song – Psalm 45
 6. laments/dirges – (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25) II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19
 7. war songs – Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 8. special benedictions or blessing of leader – Genesis 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deuteronomy 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
 9. magical texts – Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 10. sacred poems – Psalms
 11. acrostic poems – Psalm 9,34,37,119; Pro. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 12. curses – Num. 21:22-30
 13. taunt poems – Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) – Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.

- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember, this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

Judges 4 and 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exodus 14 & 15).

INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS*

*Much of this material comes from R. K. Harrison's *An Introduction To the Old Testament*, pp. 976-1003 and LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, pp 510-532.

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. In Hebrew the title is “Songs of Praise” or Praises” (*Tehillim*, cf. Psalm 145). This is surprising because so many of the psalms are laments or complaints.
- B. In the Septuagint (LXX) the title is *psalmos* which means “to pluck.” This Greek term is used of the Psalms in Luke 20:42; 24:44 and Acts 1:20. Not all the psalms were meant to be sung with musical accompaniment, but this came to be the title of the whole book in the LXX.

II. CANONIZATION

- A. Psalms is part of the third division of the Hebrew canon called the “Writings” (Kethubhim, Hagiographa). This section of the Hebrew canon was made up of:
 - 1. wisdom literature
 - a. Job
 - b. Psalm
 - c. Proverbs
 - 2. festival books (*Megilloth*)
 - a. Ruth
 - b. Ecclesiastes
 - c. Song of Songs
 - d. Lamentations
 - e. Esther
 - 3. historical books
 - a. Daniel
 - b. Ezra
 - c. Nehemiah
 - d. Chronicles
- B. The Psalms are quoted more often in the NT than any other OT book.

III. GENRE

- A. This literary form was common to the Ancient Near East. The biblical psalms share the form of hymns from Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan. Scholars have seen a close connection:
 - 1. between Psalm 104:20-30 and the Egyptian Hymn to *Aton* (14th century B.C.)
 - 2. Psalm 29 is almost identical to a Ugaritic poem to *Ba'al*, except for the name of the deity.
- B. The archaeological discovery of the Ras Shamra texts from the city of Ugarit show the similarity between Canaanite poetry and the Psalms. The discovery has helped to understand the form and vocabulary of the Psalter (see *The Anchor Bible*, 3 volumes, by Mitchell).

- C. The literary form was an ancient genre within Israel:
1. the song of Moses, Exod. 15:1-17
 2. the song of Miriam, Exod. 15:21
 3. a song of Israel, Num. 21:17-18
 4. the song of Deborah, Judges 5
 5. the song of Hannah, I Sam. 2:1-10
 6. the song of the bow from the book of Jashar, II Sam. 1:17-27
- D. Three principle forms:
1. praise psalms – characterized by starting with an IMPERATIVE such as “praise the Lord,” “sing unto the Lord,” etc.
 2. lament psalms – characterized by starting with a VOCATIVE such as “O Lord,” followed by a complaint or petition
 3. wisdom psalms – similar to categories of wisdom literature (i.e., how to live happy, successful, godly lives)

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The traditional authorship of many of the Psalms is given in titles or superscriptions, which are present in all but thirty-four Psalms. There are two ways to view these titles:
1. They are part of the Masoretic Hebrew text and present in the Septuagint (though often differing), therefore, canonical. However, the Psalms found in the Dead Sea Scrolls do not have these titles and superscriptions.
 2. They are not original with the inspired authors and should be viewed as ancient traditions, not inspired truths. It seems that at least two of them disagree with other canonical texts:
 - a. Psalm 34's title vs. I Sam. 21:10ff (the name of the Philistine king)
 - b. Psalm 56's title vs. I Sam. 21:10 (how did David get to Gath)
 - c. Psalm 60's superscriptions show the difficulty of relating to II Sam. 8:13 and I Chr. 18:12 in the number of enemies killed by whom.
 3. Another problem is that the Hebrew preposition “of” can be understood in several ways:
 - a. “written by”
 - b. “written for”
 - c. “written to”
 - d. “belonging to the time of”
 - e. “under the direction of”
 4. I think they are not inspired. I will not comment on them in this commentary.
- B. the Masoretic Hebrew Text's title designation of authors:
1. David, (I Samuel 16:16-18), (MT) author of 73 psalms; (LXX) author of 84 psalms; (Vulgate) author of 53 psalms
 2. Anonymous – 50 psalms: 1,2,10,33,43,71,91, 93-97,104-107,118-119,135,137,146-150
 3. Asaph, David's choir leader (I Chr. 15:16-17; 16:5, “the sons of Asaph” are mentioned in Neh. 7:44) 12 psalms: 50, 73-83
 4. Sons of Korah, a family of Levitical musicians (I Chr. 9:19; 15:17) 11 psalms: 42-49 except 43, 84-88 except 86
 5. Jeduthun, Levitical choir leader, (I Chr. 16:41-42; 25:1-3; II Chr. 5:12) 3 psalms: 39,62,77
 6. Solomon, 2 psalms: 72, 127. “Written by,” “written for,” “written to,” “belonging to,” “in the time of,” or “under direction of.”

7. Moses, 1 psalm: 90
 8. The Ezrahite (I Chr. 6:33; 15:17)
 - a. Ethan, Psalm 89 (some think Abraham) I Chr. 15:17,19
 - b. Heman, Psalm 88 (also a son of Korah) I Kgs. 4:31; I Chr. 4:31; 15:19
- C. Traditions of Authorship from Jewish Writings
1. *Baba Bathra* 14b (Talmud) – “David wrote the book of Psalms with the help of ten elders, with the help of Adam, the first, and Melchizedek and Abraham and Moses and Heman and Jeduthun and Asaph and the three sons of Korah”
 2. *Sanhedrin* 38b (Talmud) attributes Psalm 139 to Adam and Psalm 110 to Melchizedek
- D. The Septuagint attributes Psalms to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah (112, 126, 127, 137, 146-149).

V. DATE

- A. The dating of the Psalms is difficult for several reasons:
1. the individual psalms have a particular occasion that caused them to be written
 2. at some point the words of one psalmist became the words of the community of faith
 3. the psalms were collected through an editorial process into five books
- B. The Psalms include poems from all periods of Israel’s life:
1. Jewish tradition says:
 - a. Adam wrote Psalm 139
 - b. Melchizedek wrote Psalm 110
 - c. Abraham wrote Psalm 89
 - d. Moses wrote Psalm 90
 2. modern scholarship has divided the Psalms into three major periods:
 - a. pre-exilic (books, I, II, & IV)
 - b. exilic (book III)
 - c. post-exilic (book V)
- C. It is obvious that many of the Psalms are attributed to David:
1. David was a musical composer, player, and singer, I Sam. 16:16-18
 2. He initiated and organized the Levitical music groups, or Temple singers, I Chr. 15:1-16:43, 25:1-31; II Chr. 29:25-30
 3. The first two books of the Psalms are attributed to him, Ps. 72:20
 4. His Psalms appear in all five books of the Psalter

VI. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PSALTER

- A. There is no general theme or pattern. There is:
1. a general introduction (characteristic of a righteous person) – Psalm 1
 2. every one of the five divisions of books ends with a doxology, 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48
 3. a general close (doxology) – Psalm 150

B. Characteristics of the Five Books

1. Book 1 – Psalms 1-41
 - a. all but 4 attributed to David (1, 2, 10, 33)
 - b. YHWH as title for God predominates, YHWH – 273 to *Elohim* – 15
 - c. the historical setting was possibly David’s days in conflict with Saul
2. Book 2 – Psalms 42-72 (72:20 shows editor)
 - a. Psalms 42-49 to sons of Korah (except 43)
 - b. *Elohim* as title for God predominates, *Elohim* - 164 to YHWH - 30
 - c. the historical setting was possibly David’s days as King
3. Book 3 – Psalms 73-89
 - a. Psalms 73-83, Asaph
 - b. Psalms 84-88, sons of Korah (except 86)
 - c. 26 psalms attributed to David
 - d. YHWH as title for God 44 times; *Elohim* 43 times
 - e. the historical setting was possibly Assyrian crisis
4. Book 4 – Psalms 90-106
 - a. Psalm 101, 103 to David
 - b. Psalm 90 to Moses
 - c. All others anonymous
 - d. YHWH used 104 times; *Elohim* - 7 times
 - e. the historical setting was possibly Babylonian crisis
5. Book 5 – Psalms 107-150
 - a. Psalm 119 is an extended acrostic on God’s Word
 - b. YHWH 236 times; *Elohim* - 7 times
 - c. Psalms 146-150 are praise psalms which all begin with “Praise the Lord”
 - d. the historical setting was possibly hope in God’s future blessings

C. Numbering of Psalms Varies

1. Jewish tradition
 - a. Berachoth 9b – Psalms 1 and 2 counted as 1
 - b. Shabbath 16 – total number of psalms was 147 to match the years of Jacob’s life
2. Greek translation
 - a. Psalms 9 and 10 are together making one acrostic psalm
 - b. Psalms 114 and 115 are together, both being Hallel Psalms
 - c. Psalms 116 and 147 are divided into 2 each
3. The number of Psalms may be related to the annual Scripture reading cycle of the early synagogue

D. A sample of ways to group the Psalms:

1. by theme or topic
 - a. hymns of praise
 - (1) to God as creator, 8, 19, 104, 139, 148
 - (2) to God in general, 33, 103, 113, 117, 134-136, 145-147
 - b. hymns of thanksgiving, 9-10, 11, 16, 30, 32, 34, 92, 116, 138
 - c. laments/dirges/complaints
 - (1) corporate, 12,14,44, 53,58, 60,74,79, 80,83,85,89, 90,94, 106,123,126,137
 - (2) individual, 3-7,3,17,22,25-28,31,35,38-43,69-71,86,88,102,109,120,130, 139-143

- d. hymns of kingship
 - (1) God as king, 47, 93, 96-99
 - (2) King of Israel or Messiah, 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110
- e. hymns about Zion, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
- f. hymns of liturgy
 - (1) covenant renewal, 50, 81
 - (2) priestly blessings, 134
 - (3) about Temple, 15, 24, 68
- g. hymns about wisdom, 36, 37, 49, 73, 111, 112, 127, 128, 133
- h. hymns about faith in YHWH's faithfulness, 11, 16, 23, 62, 63, 91, 121, 131
- i. condemnation of false gods and idolatry, 82, 115
- 2. by author or speaker
 - a. hymns of David using mostly YHWH as the name of Deity, Psalms 1-41
 - b. hymns of David using mostly *Elohim* as the name of Deity, Psalms 51-72
 - c. hymns by David's Levitical musicians and singers
 - (1) Korah and sons, Psalms 42-49, 84-88
 - (2) Asaph and sons, Psalms 73-83
 - d. hymns by praisers, Psalms 111-118, 140-150
 - e. hymns by pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to worship at a feast day, Psalms 120-134
- 3. by historical events in Israel's history based on superscription or content, Psalms 14, 44, 46-48, 53, 66, 68, 74, 76, 79, 80, 83, 85, 87, 108, 122, 124-126 and 129

E. Related Psalms

- 1. Psalms 14 and 53 are the same except for the name of God
 - a. Psalm 14 has YHWH
 - b. Psalm 104 has *Elohim*
- 2. Psalms 103 and 104 are linked:
 - a. same opening and close
 - b. Psalm 103 has YHWH as Savior and Redeemer
 - c. Psalm 104 has *Elohim* as Creator and Sustainer
- 3. Psalms 32 and 51 both possibly relate to David's sin with Bathsheba
- 4. Psalms 57:7-11 and 60:5-12 are combined into Psalm 108
- 5. Psalm 18 is repeated from II Sam. 21:1-51

F. Why 150 Psalms in 5 books

- 1. possibly 150 psalms paralleled the 150 synagogue divisions of the Law for public reading on the Sabbaths
- 2. possibly five books paralleled the five books of Moses

VII. MUSICAL TERMS IN THE PSALTER

A. Musical terms in the superscriptions used to describe different types of psalms

- 1. *MIZMOR* means "to pluck." These were psalms that were meant to be sung and accompanied by musical instruments. There are 57 of these.
- 2. *SHIR* refers to songs of all kinds. There are 30 of these.
- 3. *MASCHIL* or *MASKIL* which denotes songs of special skill or teaching psalms. There are 30 of these.

4. *MITHTAM* or *MITKHTAM* – the meaning of this term is uncertain. From a possible
 - a. Hebrew root it could mean “golden” or “precious”
 - b. from an Akkadian root it could mean “hidden” or “unpublished”
 - c. from an Arabic root it could mean “atoning” or “forgiving”
 There are 6 of these.
5. *PALAL* means prayer. It is used to describe the psalms of David in books I & II (cf. Psalm 72:20). It is also found in the superscription of Psalms 17, 86, 90, 102, 142 and possibly 122.

B. Musical terms describing the playing or singing of the psalm

1. *SELAH* is used 71 times in 39 psalms and Hab. 3:3, 9, 13. Its meaning is uncertain. There have been several theories:
 - a. from the LXX “interlude” for meditation or dramatic effect
 - b. from Hebrew root “to lift,” therefore, an elevation or forte
 - c. the rabbis say it is an affirmation like “amen,” which means “forever.”
2. *SHIGGAION* or *SHIGIONOTH* is used in Psalm 7 and Habakkuk 3. It is a lament or dirge expressing sorrow. It has a highly emotional poetic form.
3. *NEGINOTH* is used 6 times and Hab. 3:19. It means “on stringed instruments.”
4. *SHEMINITH* is used twice. It may mean “on the octave” or “on the eight.” It is opposite of *ALAMOTH*, therefore, possibly for male voices (cf. I Chr. 15:21).
5. *ALAMOTH* is used 4 times. It refers to female soprano voices (cf. I Chr. 15:20).
6. *MECHILOTH* is used once. It means “on wind instruments.”
7. *GITTITH* is used 3 times. It means “on the harp.”
8. There are several references to specifically named tunes, Ps. 9, 22, 45, 53, 56, 57-59, 60, 62, 69, 75, 77, 80 & 88

VIII. PURPOSE OF PSALMS

- A. Israel believed that all of life was related to God by covenant. The Psalms are humanity’s release to God of the deepest emotions of life (awe and intimacy). They functioned in corporate worship as well as individual devotions. They were a liturgical way to recount and accent Israel’s history and theology.
- B. Israel believed in one and only one personal, caring God and that they were the special object of His love. Faith was not liturgical or creedal but personal and daily. The poetic form of the Psalms helps us express our religious self to God. The chief character of the OT is God!
- C. All of the Psalms may have begun as individual expressions of personal faith, which were later used by the community of faith (cf. Psalm 23; 139, etc).
- D. From the NT use of quotes from the Psalms it is obvious that they were revelatory, as well as emotive. They reflect truths about God, humanity, sin, hope, Messiah, and restoration.

IX. Interpretive Procedures

- A. This commentary seeks to interpret the Psalms in light of
 1. their historical setting (i.e., worldview)
 2. their genre

3. seeing how NT authors used the Psalms (LXX) to reveal and explain the gospel of Jesus Christ
 4. finally, applying these truths to our day, but this significance must follow #1, 2, 3!
- B. I have chosen to analyze the parallelism by listing the elements. This does violate the genre, but hopefully will help modern western thinkers to see the original author's emphasis and content.
- C. Each reader/interpreter needs to seek the original author's main points and not interject his/her own. This is difficult in an ancient, poetic book. Often moderns read the Psalms like the morning newspaper, written directly to them in their language and culture. With this interpretive method, one can make the Psalms say anything about anything!
- There should be a main point to each and every strophe. The problem is, strophes are not a technical issue but a subjective issue. We must all struggle with where to divide these ancient poems and be sure we have as many truths/points as the original inspired author.
- D. One final point, for me, the NT is the proper interpreter of the OT. The Psalms are not gospel but Mosaic covenant! They must be interpreted and applied in light of NT revelation.

PSALM 1

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted No MY Intro	The Way of the Righteous and the End of the Ungodly	The Contrasting Fate of the Righteous and the Wicked (A Wisdom Psalm)	True Happiness	The Two Paths
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-2 1:3-4a
1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4b-6

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a general introduction to the Psalter. Kyle Yates, in his wonderful book *Preaching From the Psalms*, pp. 115-124, says this psalm describes "the kingdom man."
 1. his character
 2. his influence
 3. his conduct
 4. his destiny

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

- B. This Psalm expresses the traditional Jewish teaching that in this life the righteous will be blessed and the wicked punished (i.e., the two ways, cf. Deut. 30:1,15-20). There are types of people who are similarly described in Jer. 17:5-8.
- C. Jesus apparently used Psalm 1 as a basic outline for His Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7.

In this context these words are not addressed to all humans, but to the covenant people, people who know YHWH's revelation but have chosen to ignore it. It seems that Matt. 7:13-14 is also based on this same crucial aspect of faith. Below are the notes from my commentary on Matthew. You can see the entire commentary at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

MATTHEW 7

7:13 Does this verse imply (1) entering a gate and then walking on a path; or (2) walking on a path which leads to a gate; or (3) is it an example of Hebrew parallelism? The fact that the gate appears first and then a way implies that this is referring to one's coming to know God in a personal way through Jesus' teachings and then living a new kingdom life. Some of the confusion here can be attributed to the threefold aspect of biblical salvation: (1) initial faith and repentance; (2) lifestyle Christlikeness; and (3) eschatological culmination. This parable is paralleled in Luke 13:23-27. See Special Topic: Use of "Door" in the NT at 6:6.

▣ **"the narrow gate"** This type of proverbial truth has traditionally been known as "the two ways" (cf. Deut. 30:15, 19; Ps. 1; Pro.4:10-19; Isa. 1:19-20 and Jer. 21:8). It is hard to identify to whom Jesus was speaking: (1) to disciples, (2) to Pharisees, or (3) to the crowd. The general context would imply that the verse relates to 5:20 and 5:48. If so, then this would imply that the restricted nature of the gate was not rules, like Pharisaic legalism, but lifestyle love flowing out of a relationship with Christ. Christ does have rules (cf. Matt. 11:29-30), but they flow from a changed heart! If we place this verse in relation to a Jewish-Gentile context (cf. 6:7, 32), then it relates to belief in Jesus as Savior (gate) and Lord (way).

Starting with vv. 13-27 there is a series of contrasts related to religious people.

1. the two ways of performing religious duties (vv. 13-14)
2. the two types of religious leaders (vv. 15-23)
3. the two foundations of a religious life (vv. 24-27)

The question is not to which group of religious people Jesus referred, but to how religious people respond to their understanding of God's will. Some use religion as a guise to gain immediate praise and rewards from men. It is a "me" and "now" focused lifestyle (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). True disciples order their lives in light of Jesus' words about the present and coming Kingdom of God.

▣ **"for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction"** "Way" can be (1) a metaphor for lifestyle and (2) the earliest title of the church (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; 18:25-26). This verse implies that salvation is not an easy decision which fits in with the mainstream of culture, but a decisive change of life which issues in obedience to the principles of God. The fact that one way leads to destruction shows the ultimate outcome of those who live lives independent of God. Often they seem very religious (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21-23; Col. 2:23)!

This phrase has a typical Greek manuscript variable. In the first of the verse it says, "enter by the narrow gate," but in the second half "the gate" is omitted in the uncial manuscript \aleph^* , some old Latin manuscripts, some Vulgate manuscripts, the Diatessaron, and the Greek texts used by Clement and Eusebius. It is present in the uncials \aleph^1 , B, C, L, W, and some old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts. So the question is, "Was it inserted for balance" or "fell out by accident?" The UBS⁴ gives the longer text (i.e., its inclusion) a "B" rating (almost certain). However, its inclusion or exclusion does not change the meaning of the text. This is true of the vast majority of the NT variations in the 5,300 Greek New Testaments in existence today! See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 19.

7:14 In a day of "easy-believeism" this is a needed balance! This is not saying that Christianity is dependent on human effort, but rather that the life of faith will be filled with persecution. "Narrow" in this verse shares the same root word as "tribulation" or "persecution" in other NT passages. This emphasis is the exact opposite of Matt. 11:29-30. These two verses could be characterized as the "gate" and the "way." We come to God through Jesus as a free gift of God (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph.

2:8-9), but once we know Him, it is the pearl of great price for which we sell all that we have to follow Him. Salvation is absolutely free, but it costs everything that we are and have.

The phrase “few they are that find it” should be compared with Matt. 7:13 and Luke 13:23-24. The question is “are more going to be lost than saved?” Is the verse teaching this numerical distinction?

- D. The rabbis combine Psalm 1 and 2 into one psalm. This may be confirmed in
1. Acts 13:33, which calls Psalm 2 “the first psalm”
 2. the use of “blessed” in Ps. 1:1 and 2:12 may be a literary technique called *inclusio*
 3. surprisingly neither Psalm 1 nor Psalm 2 has an introductory phrases in the MT

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

**¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.**

1:1-3 There seems to be a progression of time elements in these opening verses. Hebrew VERBS do not express time, only context. It is possible that

1. the PERFECT VERBS of v. 1 denote past time (i.e., how that person lived)
2. the IMPERFECT VERB of v. 2 denotes current time (i.e., way the person lives every day)
3. verse 3 starts out with a PERFECT VERB with a *waw* (see Hebrew grammar article beginning on page iii) which could denote a future condition like blessedness (i.e., expected fruitfulness)

1:1 The word “blessed” is PLURAL but the OBJECT is SINGULAR, “the man.” This could be explained by

1. the PLURAL is a Hebrew way to denote all the blessings of God
2. “the man” is a SINGULAR PLURAL denoting all men who know and obey God (i.e., James 1:2-23). This is how the term “a tree” is used in v. 3a.

This word (“blessed,” BDB 80) means “happy,” “honored,” or “well off” (cf. Matt. 5:3-12).

No human can be “happy” apart from God. We were created by Him and for Him (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8). Until our relationship with our Creator is vibrant, all other areas of physical life cannot bring true, lasting happiness! This relationship has observable characteristics!

☐ Notice the three *Qal* PERFECT VERBS which denote characteristic actions and attitude (i.e., settled character).

1. does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
2. does not stand in the way of sinners
3. does not sit in the seat of scoffers

The “blessed” faithful follower is described by negations in v. 1 and by their actions in v. 2.

▣ **“walk in the counsel of the wicked”** This speaks of one’s lifestyle associates. This emphasis on lifestyle is reinforced by the use of the VERBS “walk. . .stand. . .sit.” We are affected by the group to which we belong, our peers (cf. I Cor. 15:33).

The term “wicked” (BDB 957) refers not only to active law breakers (i.e., commission and omission) but also to those who leave God out of their lives (i.e., practical atheist).

▣ **“LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity, YHWH.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts).
3. In the Bible *El* is often compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (“God Most High,” BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God of all compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (“the Everlasting God,” BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated).

B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).

2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* – Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
 4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
 5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Psalm 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*, vv. 1,2,5; YHWH, vv. 2,6; even *Adon*, v. 4).
 6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)
1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugaritic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:21), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:8; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
 - a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24

- f. *YHWH – Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
- g. *YHWH – Ro ‘I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“path of sinners”** In the root meaning of the word “path” is “way” (cf. v. 6 [twice]) and is another term used for lifestyle. NT faithful followers were first described as people of “the Way” (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22). This implies that biblical faith is more than assent to a doctrine or the participation in a ritual, but also lifestyle obedience and personal relationship (i.e., “walk,” cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

▣ **“the seat of scoffers”** We all have presuppositions about life. “Scoffers” (BDB 539, KB 529, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) represents the stereotype of an irreligious pessimist (i.e., Isa. 5:19; Jer. 17:15; Ezek. 12:22,27; Mal. 2:17; I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:1-5; II Pet. 3:3-4; Jude v. 18).

1:2 “his delight is in the law of the LORD” The term “law” (BDB 435) means “teaching.” In the Psalms “the law” always refers to the general teachings of God (cf. Psalm 119), not just the writings of Moses. The law was not a burden to the OT believer (cf. Ps. 19:7-13), but the very revelation of YHWH for longevity, peace, security, joy, and abundance.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD’S REVELATION (USING DEUTERONOMY AND PSALMS)

- I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”
 - A. Masculine, קק – Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
 - B. Feminine, הקק – Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8,12,16, 23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171
- II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”
 - Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70,72,77, 85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174
- III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”
 - A. PLURAL, הדע – Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59, 79,95, 119,125,138,146,152,167,168
 - B. תודע or תודע – Ps. 19:7; 78:5; 81:5; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
- IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”
 - Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87, 93,94,100,104, 110, 128,134,141,159,168,173
- V. “Commandments” BDB 846
 - Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13, 17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96,98,115,127, 131,143,151, 166,176

VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”

- Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:22; 19:19; 48:11; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52,62,75,84,102, 106,120,137,149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9

VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle

- Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5,37,59

VIII. “His words”

- A. BDB 202 – Deut. 4:10,12,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43, 49,57,65, 74, 81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169

B. BDB 57

1. “word” – Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
2. “promise” – Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
3. “command” – Ps. 119:158

▣ **“he meditates day and night”** This VERB (BDB 211, KB 237, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes a “soft reading” of YHWH-revealed truths. The ancients did not read silently, so it must refer to quiet reading.

Notice how this VERB is used.

1. meditating on YHWH’s teachings – Ps. 1:2; Josh. 1:8
2. meditating on YHWH Himself – Ps. 63:7
3. meditating on YHWH’s deeds – Ps. 77:13; 143:5
4. meditating on terror – Isa. 33:18

What do you meditate on?

Our thought life is the seed bed for our actions (cf. Pro. 23:7). This verse emphasizes the principle of continually (i.e., day and night) keeping God and His will in our consciousness. This was the original purpose symbolized in Deut. 6:8-9. I have included the comment from these verses here.

Deuteronomy 6

6:8 “you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead” Originally this phrase seems to be used as a metaphor (cf. LXX). The context is lifestyle-teaching opportunities for God’s word. However, the rabbis took this verse very literally and they began to wrap a leather strap around their left hand with a small box (*tefillin*) attached which contained selected Scriptures from the Torah. The same kind of box was also strapped to their forehead. These “phylacteries” or “frontals” (BDB 377) are also mentioned in Deut. 11:18 and Matt. 23:5.

6:9 “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates” This again is a symbolic gesture that God is to have a part, not only in our home life, but in our social life (i.e., gate, cf. 21:19; 22:15,24). As the threshold (BDB 265) of the home was often seen as the place of the demonic in the Greek and Roman worlds, in the Jewish world it represented the presence of God (i.e., the place where the blood of the Passover was placed, cf. Exod. 12:7,22,23).

“Your gates” (BDB 1044) may refer to the place of social meeting and justice (i.e., like the city gates). Usually, these small boxes and door markers (*mezuzah*) contained several set passages of Scripture: Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Exod. 13:1-10,11-16.

1:3 “like a tree” There is a striking metaphor of this in Jer. 17:5-8. For a desert community, the fruitful tree was a symbol of strength and prosperity.

▣ The VERB (BDB 1060, KB 1670, *firmly* planted,” *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “transplanted” (cf. Ps. 92:14; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:10,22; 19:10,13; Hos. 9:13). This implies that this person, like all people, was

not originally a fruitful believer. Maturity takes time, effort, and especially the grace of God. Paul uses a litany of OT texts to illustrate the initial evil of humans after the Fall (cf. Rom. 3:10-18).

1. vv. 10-12 – Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-4
2. v. 13 – Ps. 5:9; 140:3
3. v. 14 – Ps. 10:7
4. vv. 15-17 – Isa. 59:7-8
5. v. 18 – Ps. 36:1

All of us are “transplanted” from rebellion into blessedness!

▣ **“streams of water”** This is PLURAL and speaks of an elaborate irrigation system.

▣ **“yields its fruit in its season”** This is a biblical metaphor to describe a mature spiritual life (cf. Matt. 7:15-27). The goal of faith is faithfulness! This same imagery has an eschatological setting in Revelation 22.

▣ **“its leaf does not wither”** This is an eschatological theme (cf. Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 22:2). Agricultural metaphors were very powerful for farmers and herders in semi-arid areas.

1:3-4 “whatever he does, he prospers. . .the wicked are not so” This is the OT view that temporal blessings and cursings were based on one’s spiritual life (cf. Deuteronomy 28 and 30).

However, this must be balanced with the life of Job, Psalm 37 and 73, and also NT revelation. The OT is a performance-based covenant but the NT is a grace-based covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Eph. 2:8-10). Both were meant to produce godly followers who demonstrate the character of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-6

**⁴The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.**

1:4 “like chaff” This is a common biblical metaphor for that which is transitory, temporary, or fleeting (cf. 35:5; 83:13; Job 21:18; Isa. 17:13; 29:5; 40:24; 41:15-16; Jer. 13:24; Hos. 13:3).

There are two ways to look at the judgment of the wicked.

1. temporal – no joy, no prosperity, early death (cf. Matthew 7)
2. eschatological – end-time judgment scene, where one’s eternal destiny is revealed (cf. Matthew 25; Revelation 20)

1:5 “stand” This VERB (BDB 763, KB 840) has the connotation of a legal setting (cf. Pro. 19:21; Isa. 14:24; note Rom. 8:31-38). Sinners/wicked will have

1. no right to present their case
2. no right to even be present in court
3. no possible excuses
4. no hope for a positive judgment

▣ **“the judgment”** This implies that individuals are responsible for their actions and will one day give an account to God (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; I Cor. 3:10-15; Rev. 20:11-15). In the OT this truth is gradually developed (cf. Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2).

▣ **“the wicked. . .sinners”** There are several descriptive titles given to those who do not “walk/stand/sit.”

1. the wicked, vv. 1, 5, 6 (BDB 957)
2. sinners, vv. 1, 5 (BDB 308)
3. scoffers, v. 1 (BDB 539)

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1202, lists the different Hebrew terms that describe those who do not know and follow YHWH (i.e., the righteous).

1. workers of iniquity – Ps. 28:3; 92:7; 101:8; 141:9
2. evildoers – Ps. 26:5; 37:9; Pro. 24:19
3. evil men – Ps. 10:15; Pro. 4:14; 14:19; 24:20
4. ruthless men – Job 15:20; 27:13; Isa. 13:11
5. sinners – Ps. 1:1,5; 104:35
6. scorners – Ps. 1:1; Pro. 9:7
7. liars – Ps. 58:3
8. transgressors – Pro. 2:22; 21:18; Jer. 12:1; Hab. 1:13
9. the enemy – Job 27:7; Ps. 3:7; 17:9; 55:3

▣ **“in the assembly of the righteous”** Notice the parallelism between this phrase and “in the judgment.” These phrases must refer to a gathering of true, faithful followers where the wicked are not recognized or able to speak.

The “assembly” can refer to

1. gathered worship (i.e., Ps. 22:25; 35:18; 40:9-10)
2. a title for the people of God (i.e., Exod. 12:3,6,19,47; 16:1,2,9,10,22)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of

appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.
4. restoring the fellowship of the Garden of Eden

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation, based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaiosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5

2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. Ephesians 1:4; 2:10
 - d. I Timothy 6:11
 - e. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - f. John 3:7
 - g. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ
4. a life to be lived

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia!*

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

1:6 “the LORD knows” The term “know” means “intimate personal relationship” (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
 - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. a person sexually – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ “the way of the wicked will perish” The theological question is what does “perish” (BDB 1, KB 2) mean?

1. total non-existence (i.e., annihilation)
2. will not last on earth (i.e., death)

The issue has become acute in the modern discussion of an eternal hell. Some evangelical scholars (i.e., John Stott) advocate a period of judgment, then non-existence for sinners instead of an eternal punishment. My problem is that the same word, “eternal,” used in Matt. 25:46, describes both “punishment” and “eschatological life.” I cannot see how an inspired writer can use them with differing senses in the same verse.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 982), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17).
- B. *Sheol* characterized
 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5
 7. people there called *Repha'im* (i.e., “spirits of the dead”), Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
 1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
 3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the afterlife.
 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
 - 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 - 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 - 3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What does the phrase "the two ways" mean?
2. Describe the difference between the righteous man and the wicked men from this Psalm.
3. Explain the use of the metaphors:
 - a. walk. . . way
 - b. tree
 - c. chaff
4. Does this Psalm teach an eschatological judgment or temporal judgment?
5. How does this Psalm relate to Job, or Psalm 37 and 73?
6. Why is this Psalm considered an introduction to the whole Psalter?

PSALM 2

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Reign of the LORD'S Anointed	The Messiah's Triumph and Kingdom	The LORD Gives Universal Dominion to His King (A Royal Psalm, Composed for a Coronation)	God's Chosen King	The Messianic Drama
No MT Intro				
2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3
2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6
2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9
2:10-12	2:10-12	2:10-12b 2:12c	2:10-12	2:10-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is understood in the NT to be Messianic (cf. Heb. 1:5; 5:5, i.e., a son, cf. Ps. 1:7). It is used by
 - a. Peter in Acts 4:25
 - b. Paul in Acts 13:33
 The problem with this referring to Jesus is verse 7. See full notes there relating to "today I have begotten You."
- B. The Messianic reign will be universal (this is the obvious conclusion to monotheism (see Special Topic at Psalm 2:9, cf. Ps. 2:8; Rev. 12:5; 19:5; see my commentary on Revelation online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

- C. There will be opposition from “the nations” (cf. 2:1-3). Many commentators relate this as an end-time military conflict (i.e., premillennialism) between those who know YHWH and His Messiah and those who do not! This is the consummation of the promise in Gen. 3:15 and the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21-22. Everything in between is a terrible parenthesis of rebellion which abrogated God’s plan of fellowship with His highest creation (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8).
- D. Conflict may come but YHWH has an eternal plan of redemption which involves His Messiah.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelicalism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3

¹**Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?**
²**The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,**
³**“Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”**

2:1-3 This describes the independence of the fallen human spirit (esp. v. 3; Genesis 3). Nationalism was God’s way of protecting humans from the one-world government (cf. Genesis 10-11; II Thessalonians 2). However, one day the world will be united under God’s Messiah. For the church this reversal of the Tower of Babel occurred at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2, i.e., “they all heard the gospel in their own language”).

2:1 The AB (p. 6) translates this first verse as “Why do the nations forgather, and the peoples number their troops?” This reading is based on

1. parallelism
2. Ugaritic word usage
3. the first VERB (“be in tumult,” BDB 921, KB 1189, *Qal* PERFECT) is found only here in the OT
4. the use of the root, “vain thing,” רָקַק in Gen. 14:14, is translated by the LXX (i.e., “he counted his own homebreds”)

It seems to form a better parallel to verse 2.

2:2 “kings. . .rulers” These are also parallel in Jdgs. 5:3; Pro. 8:15 (poetry).

▣ **“of the earth”** The term “earth” has a wide semantical field. Context must determine if it is local, regional, or global. The question here is “Did this Psalm originally refer to the nations surrounding Israel, the nations of the ANE, or all nations (cf. v. 8)? In a sense this may be a multi-fulfillment prophecy like Isa. 7:14 or typology like Psalm 22. In light of this Psalm’s usage in the NT, it has a universal sense (i.e., Messianic, eschatological, global).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAND, COUNTRY, EARTH

Like all Hebrew roots, context is crucial in determining the intended meaning. The limited number of Hebrew roots (i.e., an ancient Semitic language) causes each of them to function with different meanings and connotations. This root (BDB 75, KB 90) can mean

1. the whole planet (although the ancients did not realize its size and shape. Usually it is used of the “known world”)
 - a. Genesis 1-2; 6-9; 10:32; 11:1,4,8,9; 14:19; 18:18,25; 22:18, etc.
 - b. Exodus 9:29; 19:5
 - c. Psalm 8:1,9; 24:1; 47:2,7; Jer. 25:26,29,30
 - d. Proverbs 8:31
 - e. Isaiah 2:19,21; 6:3; 11:4,9,12; 12:5
2. earth in contrast to heaven
 - a. Genesis 1:2
 - b. Exodus 20:4
 - c. Deuteronomy 5:8; 30:19
 - d. Isaiah 37:16
3. metaphor for the human inhabitants of the planet
 - a. Genesis 6:11; 11:1
 - b. I Kings 2:2; 10:24
 - c. Job 37:12
 - d. Psalm 33:8; 66:4
4. country or territory
 - a. Genesis 10:10,11; 11:28,31
 - b. esp. Israel (a gift from YHWH, He owns it)
5. soil, cf. Joshua 7:21
6. underworld (KB 91)
 - a. Exodus 15:12
 - b. Psalm 22:29; 71:20; Jer. 17:13; Jonah 2:6
7. new world
 - a. Isaiah 9:1-7; 65:17; 66:22
 - b. see NT, Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 6:15; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,5

Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Often cognate roots can help, but not always.

▣ **“the LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“Anointed”** This is the Hebrew word for “messiah.” It is translated into Greek as “Christ.” It symbolized the special presence of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s assigned task through a person (cf. I Sam. 10:1,6; 16:13; I Kgs. 19:16; Isa. 61:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

This is taken from my commentary note at Daniel 9:6. The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603).

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g., I Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g., Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God’s special coming, Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
 - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
 - b. house of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7)
 - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of “an anointed one” with Jesus of Nazareth because of

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in Daniel 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of “a son of man” in Dan. 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of Dan. 9:24, which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus’ use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

- A. Prophet – Deut. 18:15,18
- B. King
 1. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10; Ps. 60:7; 108:8
 2. from the family of David, II Samuel 7 (from Jesse, Isa. 11:1)
 3. from other texts, I Sam. 2:10; Ps. 89:3-4; Isa. 9,11; Jer. 30:8-9; Ezek. 37:21-22; Zech. 9:9-10
- C. King/Priest
 1. Psalm 110 (king, vv. 1-3; priest, v. 4)
 2. Zech. 4:14 (the two olive trees, the two anointed ones, Zerubbabel [line of David] and Joshua [line of Aaron])
- D. Anointed One (Messiah)
 1. God’s King, Ps. 2:2; 45:7
 2. Spirit’s presence, Isa. 11:2; 61:1
 3. Coming One, Dan. 9:26
 4. three OT leaders were anointed as a sign of God’s call and empowering: kings (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; I Sam. 2:10; 9:16; 24:10; II Sam. 19:21; 23:1; Ps. 18:50), priests (cf. Exod. 28:41; Lev. 4:3; 6:22) and prophets (cf. I Kgs. 19:16)
- E. King’s Son
 1. Ps. 2:7,12

- 2. Israel's king as a symbol of God's reign (cf. I Samuel 8)
- F. Son of Man (Dan. 7:13)
 - 1. human, Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1
 - 2. divine, Dan. 7:13
- G. Special Redemptive Titles
 - 1. Suffering Servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12
 - 2. Suffering Shepherd, Zech. 12-14
 - 3. Cornerstone, Ps. 118: Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16
 - 4. Special Child, Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2
 - 5. Branch, Isa. 4:2; 11:5; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12

The NT takes these scattered references about God's special redemptive agent and clarifies and develops them into an understanding of Jesus as God's Promised Coming One (e.g., Matt. 16:13-20; John 11:25-27). The two comings of the Messiah are the means by which these diverse functions and titles are united.

For a good discussion of the distinction in the Gospels between Son of Man as authority figure versus Suffering Servant, see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 149-158.

2:3 This verse has two COHORTATIVES.

- 1. let us tear – BDB 683, KB 736, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, cf. Jer. 5:5
- 2. let us cast away – BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

Fallen humans (individuals and corporate groups) want independence from their Creator (cf. Genesis 3).

The terms “fettters” (BDB 64) and “cords” (BDB 721) refer to things that bind prisoners (here, vassals). They (like all fallen humans) saw YHWH's law as restricting their freedom, while in reality, His law is designed to keep us safe, happy, and productive in a fallen world. The laws are the loving guidelines of a parent, providing guidance and wisdom!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-6

**⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”**

2:4-6 This describes YHWH's thoughts and actions in response to the nations' uproar. This is anthropomorphic language.

- 1. sits
- 2. laughs (cf. Ps. 59:8; Pro. 1:26)
- 3. scoffs
- 4. speaks in anger

Can fallen, corporate humanity resist YHWH's will (i.e., Genesis 10-11)? No!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8
 4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 5. face – Exod. 33:11; Num. 6:25; 12:8; Deut. 34:10
 6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14
 3. closing the door of Noah's ark – Gen. 7:16
 4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; Lev. 26:31
 5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6
 - C. Human emotions (some examples)
 1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 29:20
 3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
 4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
 - D. Family terms (some examples)
 1. father
 - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1
 - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:6-14; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
 2. parent – Hosea 11:1-4
 3. mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 (analogy to nursing mother)
 4. young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3
- II. Reasons for the use of this type of language
 - A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
 - B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover).

- C. Though necessary at times (i.e., Gen. 3:8), God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

2:4 “sits in the heavens” This refers to the place of God’s throne, where He reigns! For “heavens” see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAVEN

The Hebrew term (BDB 1029, translated “heaven,” “sky,” “firmament,” “air”) can refer to several things (i.e., a series of domes or spheres of creation):

1. In Gen.1:8-20 it refers to the atmosphere above the earth where clouds move and birds fly.
2. This dome (cf. Gen. 1:6,20; Isa. 40:22; 42:5) above the earth is where God sends the rain (i.e., “windows of heaven,” cf. Ps. 78:23-29; Mal. 3:10 or “the water jars of heaven,” cf. Job 38:37).
3. This dome is where the stars dwell and planets move (two dimensional). It could refer to all the created cosmos (tens of billions of galaxies).
4. Above this dome is the abode of God (i.e., the third or seventh heaven). It is the highest heaven (e.g., Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27,30,32; Ps. 2:4; 148:4; Isa. 66:1).
5. The theological emphases
 - a. God is the creator of everything.
 - b. He controls creation (i.e., light and dark, rain and drought).
 - c. He creates and places the heavenly lights (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets).
 - d. There are spheres or realms of reality:
 - 1) earth
 - 2) above the earth
 - 3) invisible/angelic (cf. Col. 1:16)
 - 4) God’s presence and abode
 - e. they are all connected and controlled by His will

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS

In the OT the term “heaven” is usually PLURAL (i.e., *shamayim*, BDB 1029). The Hebrew term means “height.” God dwells on high. This concept reflects the holiness and transcendence of God.

In Gen. 1:1 the PLURAL “heavens and earth” has been viewed as God creating (1) the atmosphere above this planet or (2) a way of referring to all of reality (i.e., spiritual and physical). From this basic understanding other texts were cited as referring to levels of heaven: “heaven of heavens” (cf. Ps. 68:33) or “heaven and the heaven of heavens” (cf. Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:4). The rabbis surmised that there might be

1. two heavens (i.e., R. Judah, Hagigah 12b)
2. three heavens (Test. Levi 2-3; Ascen. of Isaiah 6-7; Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 114:1)

3. five heavens (III Baruch)
4. seven heavens (R. Simonb. Lakish; II Enoch 8; Ascen. of Isa. 9:7)
5. ten heavens (II Enoch 20:3b; 22:1)

All of these were meant to show God's separation from physical creation and/or His transcendence. The most common number of heavens in rabbinical Judaism was seven. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (p. 30), says this was connected to the astronomical spheres, but I think it refers to seven being the perfect number (i.e., days of creation with seven representing God's rest in Genesis 1).

Paul, in II Cor. 12:2, mentions the "third" heaven (Greek *ouranos*) as a way of identifying God's personal, majestic presence. Paul had a personal encounter with God!

▣ **"laughs"** The VERB (BDB 965, KB 1315, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a literary way of denoting YHWH's sovereignty. THE UBS *Handbook* (p. 26) has an insightful comment. "In Ps. 1:1 'scoffers' are people who make fun of God; here it is God who mocks the pagan rulers."

▣ **"Lord"** Verses 4a and 4b are parallel, so the Deity referred to is YHWH (cf. v. 2c). Here the word is not YHWH but *Adon* the Hebrew word for "owner," "husband," "lord." See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

2:6 YHWH, in contradistinction to the idols who cannot see, hear, or act, installed (lit. "consecrated," BDB 651, KB 703, *Qal* PERFECT) His King! Israel's King acted as YHWH's representative.

Notice the use of the personal PRONOUN, "Me," "My" (twice). YHWH is personally present and active in the world, and especially with His covenant people.

▣ **"Zion, My holy mountain"** These both refer to Mount Moriah, the hill in Jerusalem on which the temple was built. Originally Zion referred to the hill on which the Jebusite fortress was built (i.e., Jerusalem encompassed seven hills). David conquered it and built his palace on this hill. Later it came to be a way to designate the entire city of Jerusalem.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:7-9

⁷**"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.**
⁸**Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.**
⁹**You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware."**

2:7-9 The speaker is the new King, here called YHWH's "Son" (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

This is one of the major NT titles for Jesus. It surely has divine connotations. It included Jesus as "the Son" or "My Son" and God addressed as "Father." It occurs in the NT over 124 times. Even Jesus' self-designation as "Son of Man" has a divine connotation from Dan. 7:13-14.

In the OT the designation “son” could refer to four specific groups.

- A. angels (usually in the PLURAL, cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1)
- B. the King of Israel (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27)
- C. the nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10)
- D. Israeli judges (cf. Ps. 82:6)

It is the second usage that is linked to Jesus. In this way “son of David” and “son of God” both relate to II Samuel 7, Psalm 2 and 89. In the OT “son of God” is never used specifically of the Messiah, except as the eschatological king as one of the “anointed offices” of Israel. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the title with Messianic implications is common (see specific references in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 770). Also “Son of God” is a Messianic title in two interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic works (cf. II Esdras 7:28; 13:32,37,52; 14:9 and I Enoch 105:2).

Its NT background as it refers to Jesus is best summarized by several categories.

- 1. His pre-existence (cf. John 1:1-18)
- 2. His unique (virgin) birth (cf. Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35)
- 3. His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. God’s voice from heaven unites the royal king of Psalm 2 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53).
- 4. His satanic temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13. He is tempted to doubt His sonship or at least to accomplish its purpose by different means than the cross).
- 5. His affirmation by unacceptable confessors
 - a. demons (cf. Mark 1:23-25; Luke 4:31-37,41; Mark 3:11-12; 5:7)
 - b. unbelievers (cf. Matt. 27:43; Mark 14:61; John 19:7)
- 6. His affirmation by His disciples
 - a. Matt. 14:33; 16:16
 - b. John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
- 7. His self affirmation
 - a. Matthew 11:25-27
 - b. John 10:36
- 8. His use of the familial metaphor of God as Father
 - a. His use of *Abba* for God
 - 1) Mark 14:36
 - 2) Romans 8:15
 - 3) Galatians 4:6
 - b. His recurrent use of Father (*patēr*) to describe His relationship to deity

In summary, the title “Son of God” had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles because of their pagan background of “the gods” taking women with the resulting offspring being “the titans” or “giants.”

2:7 “today I have begotten You” In a sense this phrase represents the divine promises of II Samuel 7 (cf. Ps. 89:26-27), where YHWH promises in figurative language to be a “father” to David’s royal descendants. “Today” would refer to the king’s coronation day. Note John H. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, p. 89, footnote 19,

“the idea that procreation is related to role rather than to substance is evident even in the biblical statements like . . . (Ps. 2:7) in which the king is born to his royal position.”

Also note G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 190. However, in this Psalm it is used of the Messiah (i.e., Jesus, cf. Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), which caused some theological problems particularly in relation to “monotheism,” and later the NT heresy of adoptionism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). There is one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; I Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” II Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other;. . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one God for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; I Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified)
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8)
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10)
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3)

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)
2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God’s eternal plan for fallen humanity’s redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

The theological issue is “Is the Messianic king pre-existent deity” or a created being (cf. Pro. 8:22-31; Rom. 1:4)? John 1:1-3 answers this issue. It is so important that I have included my notes from John 1:1-3.

John 1

1:1 “In the beginning” This reflects Genesis 1:1 and is also used in I John 1:1 as a reference to the incarnation. It is possible that I John was a cover letter to the Gospel. Both deal with Gnosticism. Verses 1-5 are an affirmation of Jesus Christ’s divine pre-existence before creation (cf. 1:15; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8).

The NT is described as

1. a new creation, not marred by the Fall (i.e., Gen. 3:15 fulfilled for mankind)
2. a new conquest (Promised Land)
3. a new exodus (fulfilled prophecy)
4. a new Moses (law giver)
5. a new Joshua (cf. Heb. 4:8)
6. a new water miracle (cf. Hebrews 3-4)
7. new manna (cf. John 6)

and so many more, especially in Hebrews.

☐ **“was”** (thrice) This is an IMPERFECT TENSE (cf. vv. 1,2,4,10) which focuses on continual existence in past time. This TENSE is used to show the Logos’ pre-existence (cf. 8:57-58; 17:5,24; II Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:17; Heb. 10:5-7). It is contrasted with the AORIST TENSES of vv. 3, 6, and 14.

☐ **“the Word”** The Greek term *logos* referred to a message, not just a single word. In this context it is a title which the Greeks used to describe “world reason” and the Hebrews as analogous with “Wisdom.” John chose this term to assert that God’s Word is both a person and a message. See Contextual Insights, C.

☐ **“with God”** “With” could be paraphrased “face to face.” It depicts intimate fellowship. It also points toward the concept of one divine essence and three personal eternal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 14:26). The NT asserts the paradox that Jesus is separate from the Father, but also that He is one with the Father.

☐ **“the Word was God”** This VERB is IMPERFECT TENSE as in v. 1a. There is no ARTICLE (which identifies the SUBJECT, see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 66) with *Theos*, but *Theos* is placed first in the Greek phrase for emphasis. This verse and v. 18 are strong statements of the full deity of the pre-existent Logos (cf. 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 17:11; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; II Pet. 1:1). Jesus is fully divine as well as fully human (cf. I John 4:1-3). He is not the same as God the Father, but He is the very same divine essence as the Father.

The NT asserts the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth, but protects the distinct personhood of the Father. The one divine essence is emphasized in John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30,34-38; 14:9-10; and 20:28, while their distinctives are emphasized in John 1:2,14,18; 5:19-23; 8:28; 10:25,29; 14:11,12,13,16.

1:2 This is parallel to v. 1 and emphasizes again the shocking truth in light of monotheism that Jesus, who was born around 6-5 B.C., has always been with the Father and, therefore, is Deity.

1:3 “All things came into being through Him” The Logos was the Father’s agent of creation of both the visible and the invisible (cf. v. 10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). This is similar to the role wisdom plays in Ps. 33:6 and Pro. 8:12-23 (in Hebrews “wisdom” is a FEMININE gender NOUN).

☐ **“apart from Him nothing came into being”** This is a refutation of the Gnostic false teaching of angelic aeons between the high, good god and a lesser spiritual being that formed, pre-existent matter (see Contextual Insights, D).

It must be noted that the “Father. . .son” imagery is a figurative way to show a personal relationship (cf. Deut. 32:18). The human family is an easily understood way to symbolize this fellowship. This same truth is also part of the Hebrew concept of “know.” See Special Topic: Know at Ps. 1:6.

2:8 The reign of the Messiah will be universal (cf. Ps. 67:7; Isa. 45:22; 52:10; Jer. 16:19; Micah 5:4, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth at 1:2. This is God’s world. It was created as a platform for God and the creatures made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). The rebellion of Adam and

Eve (cf. Genesis 3) damaged the image of God in mankind and negatively affected physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). This is not the world that God intended it to be! However, He has refused to give up on mankind. He revealed Himself through Israel and sent His Son (cf. Gen. 3:15) to restore creation to its intended purpose. The Bible starts with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Genesis 1-3; Ps. 1:3) and it concludes with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). Everything between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21-22 is God cleaning up the mess!

▣ **“inheritance. . .possession”** Both of these words have theological significance to God’s gift, to His covenant people. The first is often especially related to the Levites. The second is a promise to the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:8; 48:4; Lev. 25:34).

2:9 “You will break them with a rod of iron” The Hebrew VERB (BDB 949, KB 1270, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is from the root עָרַר, but the LXX and Peshitta read it as “rule” or “shepherd,” הָעַר (BDB 944). The early church used the LXX and this is how the phrase is used in Rev. 2:27; 12:5 and 19:15.

However, the parallelism with the next line of Hebrew poetry (i.e., “shatter” – BDB 658, KB 711, *Piel* IMPERFECT) favors “break.”

▣ **“rod”** The NOUN (BDB 986) can mean “rod,” “staff,” or “scepter.” The last option seems best in the royal context (cf. Ps. 45:6; 125:3; Num. 24:17; Isa. 14:5; Ezek. 19:11,14; Zech. 10:11). Although if “shepherd” is correct, then it would be “staff” (cf. Ps. 23:4; Micah 7:14).

▣ **“You will shatter them like earthenware”** The breaking of a clay vessel was an ANE visual symbol of judgment.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-12

¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;

Take warning, O judges of the earth.

¹¹Worship the LORD with reverence

And rejoice with trembling.

¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way,

For His wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

2:10-12 Notice the series of IMPERATIVES as the psalmist (i.e., David, cf. Acts 4:25), speaking for YHWH, warns the rulers of this world to prepare to meet Him (cf. Pro. 8:12-21).

1. show discernment – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. take warning – BDB 415, KB 418, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. worship the Lord – BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. rejoice with trembling – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. do homage to the Son (lit. “kiss”) – BDB 676, KB 730, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

2:12 “the Son” There is some doubt about this translation. The Hebrew word “son,” בֶּן (BDB 61), is used in v. 7 but here the word is כֵּן (BDB 135, i.e., the Aramaic word for “son,” cf. Pro. 31:2 [thrice]), which in Hebrew can mean “pure” (BDB 141 II, cf. Ps. 24:4; 73:1; Job 11:4; Pro. 14:4). The NRSV and NJB translate vv. 11v-12a as “with trembling kiss his feet.” The UBS Text Project (p. 164) gives “kiss the Son” a “B” rating (i.e., some doubt).

Some scholars have assumed that since vv. 11-12 are directed to surrounding pagan nations, there is a purposeful switch from the Hebrew “son” to the Aramaic “son.” The general thrust of “submission” is clear even if the linguistic details are not!

▣ **“you perish *in the way*”** One wonders if it is by accident that both the words “perish” (BDB 1, KB 2) and “way” (BDB 202) are used in Psalm 1. Biblical faith is a daily relationship with YHWH and His Messiah. Jesus may surely have used Psalm 1 and 2 as an outline in Matthew 5-7, esp. 7:13,21-23,26-27.

▣ **“How blessed are all who take refuge in Him”** The last line of Psalm 2 links to the first line of Psalm 1, possibly a literary technique called *inclusio*. Thereby, Psalm 1– Psalm 2 comprise one literary unit (cf. Acts 13:33). The Talmud suggests that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 form one psalm (cf. b. Ber. 9b-10a). Blessed is the true believer who reverences YHWH and obeys His revelation! Faith and faithfulness must go together. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated!

Notice that both Ps. 1:1 and 2:12 accentuate human choices and activities. Biblical faith is a life journey of trust and obedience.

YHWH is described in several metaphors as a place of safety, security, and rest. We can trust/take refuge in

1. a rock – Deut. 32:37; II Sam. 22:2,3; Ps. 18:2
2. a fortress – II Sam. 22:2; Ps. 144:2
3. a stronghold – Ps. 18:2; 62:2; 144:2
4. a deliverer – II Sam. 22:2; Ps. 144:2
5. a shield – Gen. 15:1; II Sam. 22:3; Ps. 3:3; 18:2; 144:2; Pro. 30:5
6. a horn of salvation – II Sam. 22:26; Ps. 18:2; 75:10
7. a mother bird – Ps. 17:8; 36:7 (also note Deut. 32:10-11); 57:1; 63:7; 91:4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this Psalm considered Messianic?
2. Are the nations local or worldwide?
3. Define “Anointed” in verse 2.
4. Are “His Anointed” and My Son the same person?
5. If this refers to Jesus does verse 7 imply he was created?

PSALM 3

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Morning Prayer of Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son" (cf. II Samuel 15-16)	The LORD Helps His Troubled People	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal enemies (A Lament)	Morning Prayer for Help	Morning Prayer of the Upright in Persecution
3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2
3:3-6	3:3-4 3:5-6	3:3-4 3:5-6	3:3-4 3:5-6	3:3-4 3:5-6
3:7-8	3:7-8	3:7 3:8	3:7-8	3:7-8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-2

¹**O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!**

Many are rising up against me.

²**Many are saying of my soul,**

"There is no deliverance for him in God."

Selah.

3:1-2 The psalmist felt trapped/surrounded by adversaries (BDB 865 III).

1. they have increased (cf. v. 6)

2. they are rising up
3. they are saying

Notice the threefold use of “many” (BDB 912 I). Even for the righteous God-fearer there are problems (real and imagined) in this fallen world. The Psalms want to give the reader a faith worldview (i.e., the eyes of faith, cf. II Kgs. 6:17). The remainder of the psalm describes YHWH’s presence and care!

One wonders how these laments work in

1. our day
2. our faith groups

Are those who disagree with us enemies of God? I think it best to use the psalms as words of encouragement to faith/trust in God and not as an attack on all who disagree with me! The true enemies are those who reject our God and His Christ!

3:2 “my soul” This is the Hebrew word *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711-713), which denotes an air-breathing animal (i.e., related to the Hebrew word for breath and spirit). It is used of mankind (cf. Gen. 2:7) and cattle (cf. Gen. 1:24; 2:19).

Humans are both a part of this creation and created in the image and likeness of the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). We have both a physical component and a spiritual component.

▣ **“Selah”** Notice this term is placed in the margin, apparently for the choir director, in vv. 2,4,8. The root is not certain. Here are some of the theories.

1. from Persian root for “song”
2. from Hebrew לָלַח (BDB 699) “to lift up,” i.e., a higher pitch
3. from Hebrew תָּצַח (BDB 663) meaning “always,” functioning like “amen”
4. from LXX denoting an interlude of instruments

With all these theories it is obvious that moderns do not know what it refers to in the Psalter. It is used over 70 times in the MT and over 90 times in the LXX. See Intro. to Psalms VIII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:3-6

³**But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.**
⁴**I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.**
⁵**I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.**
⁶**I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me round about.**

3:3-6 “O LORD” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“You. . .are”** The psalmist enumerates in powerful imagery the person and work of YHWH for the believer.

1. a shield, v. 3 – Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29; II Sam. 22:3; Ps. 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9,10,11; 119:114; 144:2 (also note I Pet. 1:5)
2. my glory, v. 3 – Ps. 62:7
 - a. honor
 - b. victory (cf. TEV)

3. lifts my head, v. 3
 - a. victory in battle
 - b. recognition by the judge in court
 - c. deliverance from death
4. answers my prayers, v. 4
5. sustains me, v. 5
6. causes me not to have fear, v. 6

3:4 “I was crying to the LORD” This prayer for help may be v. 7a. The consequences of “He answered me” are seen in vv. 7b-8.

▣ **“from His holy mountain”** This refers to the temple, where in OT imagery, YHWH dwelt between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the ark of the covenant. This was the place where heaven and earth (the spiritual and physical) met!

3:5 Sleep is possible because of YHWH’s presence, peace, and protection (cf. Ps. 4:8; Pro. 3:24). Verse 5a is an idiom for a restful night’s sleep! This is possible because of one’s faith and trust in YHWH, His presence, His promises, His character!

3:6 This is hyperbolic, idiomatic language. The term “ten thousand” (BDB 914) is an idiom for an innumerable host. The PLURAL (as here) intensifies this (cf. Deut. 33:2,17; I Sam. 18:7; Micah 6:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7-8

⁷**Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!**
For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.
⁸**Salvation belongs to the LORD;**
Your blessing upon Your people! Selah.

3:7 This verse begins with two IMPERATIVES (i.e., prayer requests).

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE used in the sense of entreating YHWH to act, cf. Num. 10:35; Ps. 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 44:26; 68:1; 74:22; 82:8; 132:8; as enemies “arose,” now the palmist calls on YHWH to rise up (i.e., from His throne)!
2. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, which in the OT, denotes deliverance from the trials, pains, issues of this life (cf. v. 8)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
 - a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1

3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
 4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9
- Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

▣ **“has smitten. . .has shattered”** YHWH brings deliverance by forcefully dealing with the psalmist’s adversaries.

1. has smitten – BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. has shattered – BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* PERFECT

The “cheek” (BDB 534 I) and “teeth” 9BDB 1042 I) are idioms of shame and defeat (cf. I Kgs. 22:24; Job 16:10; Ps. 58:6; Micah 5:1). It specifically refers to their hateful words (cf. v. 2).

3:8 There are no VERBS in verse 8. Often the biblical Hebrew “to be” VERB is supplied by the reader.

3:9 Notice how an individual lament is used to reflect a corporate concern (i.e., “Thy people,” of v. 9; Ps. 25:22; 28:9). YHWH brings salvation/deliverance, not only to individuals who ask but to the nation who acts (i.e., II Chr. 7:14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the adversaries?
2. Why are they denying YHWH’s deliverance?
3. What does the IMPERATIVE “arise” mean?
What are its possible backgrounds
4. What does “Selah” mean?

PSALM 4

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Evening Prayer of Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; on stringed instruments, a Psalm of David”	The Safety of the Faithful	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies (a Lament)	Evening Prayer for Help	Evening Prayer
4:1	4:1	4:1	4:1	4:1
4:2-3	4:2-3	4:2	4:2	4:2
		4:3	4:3	4:3
4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4
				4:5
4:6-8	4:6-8	4:6-7	4:6-7	4:6
				4:7
		4:8	4:8	4:8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF OUTLINE

- A. Opening prayer to God, v. 1
- B. Address to opponents, vv. 2-3

C. Commands for an appropriate response to God, vv. 4-5

D. Closing prayer to God, vv. 6-8

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1

**¹Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.**

4:1 Notice the IMPERATIVES used to implore God.

1. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 27:7
2. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:16; 69:16
3. hear my prayer – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 39:12

The psalmist expects God to hear and act (cf. Ps. 3:4; 6:8,9; 17:6; 86:7)! Prayer is not only request, it is fellowship! We need Him even more than our answered requests!

▣ Notice how the psalmist characterizes God.

1. O God of my righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
2. O God, reliever of my distress

There are so many personal PRONOUNS in these first two verses! YHWH is the only source of “righteousness,” which brings peace (both physically and spiritually)!

▣

NASB, NKJV	“relieved me”
NRSV, LXX	“gave me room”
NJB	“set me at large”
JPSOA, REB	“freed me”

The Hebrew word (BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is an idiom for a wide space (cf. Ps. 18:19), the opposite of “restriction” (i.e., oppression, tribulation, narrow straights, BDB 865, “distress”). Its metaphorical nature can be seen in Gen. 26:22; Deut. 33:20; Ps. 25:17; Isa. 54:2; 57:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:2-3

**²O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?
Selah.**

**³But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.**

4:2 The author develops the antagonistic setting by two questions directed to those who oppose.

1. reproach/shame – BDB 484
2. worthless/vain words – BDB 938
3. deception/lies – BDB 469

As God is called “my righteousness” in v. 1, now He is called on to reveal the attitude, motives, and actions of those who would do the psalmist harm.



NASB “my honor become a reproach”

NKJV “my glory to shame”

NJB “heavy of heart”

The NJB follows the LXX, which apparently translated a different Hebrew text than the MT. The UBS Text Project (p. 165) gives the MT a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2.

4:3 How should the opponents respond to the psalmist’s questions of v. 2?

1. know (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) that the Lord has set apart (LXX, “has done wondrous things for His holy one,” cf. NJB, NEB) the godly man for Himself (UBS Text Project gives an “A” rating [very high probability])
2. the Lord hears the godly man (BDB 339) when he prays

YHWH knows and responds to His true followers. An attack on them is an attack on Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4-5

⁴Tremble, and do not sin;

Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.

Selah.

⁵Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,

And trust in the LORD.

4:4-5 There is a series of commands whereby the psalmist suggests how his opponents (i.e., “sons of men,” v. 2) should live.

1. tremble – BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. do not sin – BDB 306, KB 305, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. meditate (lit. speak) – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 77:6
4. be still – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. offer sacrifices – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:3; 62:8

4:4 Number 1 above is quoted by Paul in Eph. 4:26 in combination with Deut. 24:15, as “be angry, and yet do not sin,” which is from the LXX. The MT has “tremble” which denotes “fear” (cf. Isa. 32:11; Micah 7:17; Hab. 3:16), not anger.

▣ **“be still”** The word (BDB 198, KB 226) has several usages.

1. fear in battle – Exod. 15:14-16
2. speechless in judgment – II Sam. 2:9
3. silence in death – Ps. 31:17; 94:17; Jer. 48:2; 49:26
4. shocked silence at destruction – Jer. 25:37
5. silence of wisdom in an appropriate moment – Ps. 4:4; 62:5; 131:2; Amos 5:13

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2.

4:5 “trust in the Lord” This is a recurrent theme (BDB 105, KB 120).

1. a call to sinners – Ps. 4:5

2. a call to the faithful – Ps. 9:10; 32:10; 37:3,5; 40:3; 55:23; 56:4,11; 84:12; 91:2; 112:7; 115:11; 125:1; 143:8; Pro. 16:20; 29:25; Isa. 26:3-4
3. the king – Ps. 21:7; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7
4. the fathers – Ps. 22:4-5
5. O people – Ps. 62:8; 115:9
6. priests – Ps. 115:10

It is trust in YHWH and His word that brings hope (cf. v. 3), joy (cf. v. 7), and peace (cf. v. 8) in this fallen world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:6-8

**⁶Many are saying, “Who will show us *any* good?”
 Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!
⁷You have put gladness in my heart,
 More than when their grain and new wine abound.
⁸In peace I will both lie down and sleep,
 For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.**

4:6-7 Like verse 2, verse 6 begins with a question which reflects the attitude, motives, and actions of the psalmist’s opponents.

The answer is the request (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) that YHWH “lift up the light of His countenance” (cf. Num. 6:26; Ps. 80:3,7,19). This is an idiom of deity taking personal notice and extending mercy to His faithful (v. 5b) followers (cf. Ps. 27:1; Micah 7:8). YHWH has

1. put gladness in the psalmist’s heart
2. put peace in the psalmist’s heart
3. put safety in the psalmist’s heart

In Num. 6:26 the VERB is *אָשַׁח*, BDB 669, but here it is *הִסַּח* (KB 702). Apparently they are two forms of one root (cf. BDB 650, KB 702, NET Bible, p. 853, #6).

4:7 “heart” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb* (BDB 523). It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)

6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart," also notice Hosea 11:8-9
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
 - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

▣ **"new grain"** *The UBS Handbook* (p. 47) mentions that the Hebrew MSS found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the LXX and Vulgate, add "and olive oil" after "grain" and before "new wine," which may come from Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51.

▣ **"new wine"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is "new wine" (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages ("sweet wine," BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term "strong drink" (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term "drunk" or "drunkard." It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).

2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Nabal – I Sam. 25:36; Uriah – II Sam. 11:13; Amnon – II Sam. 13:28; Elah – I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Numbers 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Mathew. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called “new wine” or “sweet wine.”
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered “aged wine” and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).

- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.
 - F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called “old wine” and had to be diluted with water.
 - G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.
- V. Closing Statements
- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
 - B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible’s position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
 - C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
 - D. If we push total abstinence as God’s will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

4:8

NASB, NKJV

NRSV, REV,

NJB

“For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety”

NET, JPSOA (footnote)

“For You, O LORD, keep me alone and secure”

The word “alone” (BDB 94) can modify

1. the Lord
2. the faithful follower who sleeps alone (i.e., no enemies present)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are “sons of men”? How are they characterized?
2. What are the different meanings of the Hebrew VERB “know”?
3. Explain verse 4 in your own words.
4. Who are the “many” in verse 6?

PSALM 5

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer For Protection From the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David”	A Prayer for Guidance	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (a Lament)	A Prayer for Protection	Morning Prayer
5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-2 5:3
5:4-7	5:4-6 5:7-8	5:4-6 5:7-8	5:4-6 5:7-8	5:4-5a 5:5b-6 5:7
5:8-10	5:9-10	5:9-10	5:9-10	5:8 5:9 5:10
5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11 5:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-3

¹Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my groaning.

²Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,
For to You I pray.

³In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;
In the morning I will order *my* prayer to You and *eagerly* watch.

5:1-2 This prayer begins with three IMPERATIVES.

1. give ear to my words – BDB 24; KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. consider my groanings – BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (“groaning,” BDB 211, only here and Ps. 39:3, “musing”)
3. heed the sound of my cry – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These do not represent a fear on the psalmist’s part that God will not hear, but Hebrew parallelism.

5:1 “O LORD” Notice the parallelism of titles.

1. O LORD (YHWH, cf. Exod. 3:14)
2. my King (the terminology comes from I Sam. 8:7, cf. Ps. 84:3, the rabbis later call YHWH “the King of the universe”)
3. my God (see note below)

For #3 there are several forms of the term “God/god.” A good example is Deuteronomy 32.

1. vv. 3,15 – אֱלֹהִים (BDB 42-43, cf. Ps. 5:2)
2. vv. 4,18,21 – אֱלֹהִים (BDB 41-42, cf. Ps. 5:4)
3. v. 17 – אֱלֹהֵינוּ (BDB 43-44, cf. Ps. 5:10)

All are based on *El*, which denotes power and strength. In poetry all are used interchangeably.

5:3 This Psalm denotes a morning prayer. For post-exilic Jews there were several set times a day when prayers were offered.

1. at the time of the morning sacrifice, about 9 a.m. (possibly alluded to in Ps. 46:5b)
2. at noon
3. at the time of the evening sacrifice, about 3 p.m.

This faithful follower structured his day around times with God. He believed God heard and would respond (i.e., “*eagerly* watch,” v. 3b, BDB 859 I, KB 1044, *Piel* IMPERFECT).

The daily sacrifices in the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 29:38-42), and later temple, occurred every morning and evening. They were called “The Continual.” These were special times to draw near to YHWH.



NASB “I will order”

NKJV “I will direct”

NRSV “I will plead”

TEV “I will offer”

NJB “I will lay”

LXX “I will present”

This VERB (BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has a wide semantic field but basically means “to arrange something.” Here it could be (1) words or (2) sacrifice.

▣ **“eagerly watch”** This VERB (BDB 859, KB 1044, *Piel* IMPERFECT) denotes expectant waiting for something, here for YHWH to respond to the psalmist’s prayer (cf. Lam. 4:17; Micah 7:7; Hab. 2:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:4-7

⁴For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;

No evil dwells with You.

⁵The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes;

You hate all who do iniquity.

⁶You destroy those who speak falsehood;

The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

⁷But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house,

At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.

5:4-6 The psalmist describes God (אל, see note above).

1. not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness
2. no evil dwells (permanent abode) with You (I think James 1:17c,d is a theological parallel)
3. the boastful will not stand before Your eyes (cf. Ps. 1:5)
4. You hate all who do iniquity
5. You destroy those who speak falsehood
6. You abhor the man of bloodshed and deceit

5:5 “You hate” This is shocking to us—that YHWH, the Creator, the desirer of fellowship with all humans, “hates” (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT). The Bible uses human terms to describe deity. This always causes tensions. See the Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6 on anthropomorphisms.

His love for those “made in His image” (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) causes the opposite reaction when they treat each other in destructive ways!

5:7 In contrast to the faithless follower, the psalmist knows that because of YHWH’s “abundant lovingkindness” (cf. Ps. 6:4b), he will worship Him in the tabernacle/temple in reverence.

The term “lovingkindness” is the NASB’s way of translating the powerful covenant term *hesed* (BDB 338).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

A. Used in connection to human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)

B. Used in connection to God

1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 7:28; 9:9)
 - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,159)

- d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:1)
- e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
- 2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
- 3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
- 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

▣ **“temple”** There was no temple in David’s day! But the same term (BDB 228) is used in I Sam. 1:9 and 3:3 for the tabernacle.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-10

**⁸O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes;
Make Your way straight before me.**

**⁹There is nothing reliable in what they say;
Their inward part is destruction *itself*.
Their throat is an open grave;
They flatter with their tongue.**

**¹⁰Hold them guilty, O God;
By their own devices let them fall!
In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out,
For they are rebellious against You.**

5:8 This is the content of the psalmist’s prayer mentioned in vv. 1-2.

- 1. lead (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) me in Your righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
- 2. make Your way straight/smooth (*Kethib* has *Hiphil*, while *Qere* has *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. NET Bible, p. 854, #4) before me (the terms “righteous” and “straight” are related theologically)

5:9 The psalmist is concerned about the words and deeds of his foes (“enemies,” v. 8, BDB 1004).

- 1. there is nothing reliable/true in what they say
- 2. their inward parts are destruction *itself*
- 3. their throat is an open grave
- 4. they flatter/smooth tongue (cf. Ps. 12:2)

Paul quotes this verse in his litany of OT texts which reflect the fallen nature of mankind in Rom. 3:10-18 (esp. v. 13).

5:10 The psalmist asks God to act against the enemies because of their words and deeds.

- 1. hold them guilty – BDB 79, KB 95, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (the opposite of justification)
- 2. by their own devices let them fall – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 3. in the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out – BDB 623, KB 673, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., from YHWH’s personal presence at worship, v. 7 or at trial, v. 5)
- 4. for they are rebellious against You – BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice the different words the psalmist uses to describe his enemies.

1. wicked, v. 4
2. boastful, v. 5
3. doers of iniquity, v. 5
4. speak falsehood, v. 6
5. men of bloodshed, v. 6
6. men of deceit, v. 6
7. foes (i.e., those who lie in wait), v. 8
8. nothing reliable, v. 9
9. attitude of destruction, v. 9
10. liar, v. 9
11. transgressor, v. 10
12. rebellious, v. 10

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:11-12

**¹¹But let all who take refuge in You be glad,
Let them ever sing for joy;
And may You shelter them,
That those who love Your name may exult in You.
¹²For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him with favor as with a shield.**

5:11-12 In contrast to the wicked enemy, the psalmist now describes the faithful followers (i.e., PLURALS, the prayer and experience of one became the description of all).

1. they take refuge in YHWH
2. they rejoice in YHWH
3. they take shelter in Him (I think this refers to a female bird metaphor, cf. Ruth 2:12; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4; see Special Topic below)
4. they love and exult in His name (see Special Topic below)

In light of this, YHWH

1. shelters them
2. blesses them
3. surrounds them as a shield (cf. I Sam. 23:26)

One can tell the difference between a faithful follower and a faithless follower by their fruit (cf. Matt. 7:15-22)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

The idiom of “shadow” was common in the ANE. Note the examples in the Bible.

1. idiom of protection, Isa. 16:3; 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20
2. idiom of “shadow of the hand,” Ps. 121:5; Isa. 49:2; 51:16
3. idiom of “shadow of the roof,” Gen. 19:8
4. idiom of “shadow of God’s special cloud,” cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; Isaiah 4:6; 25:4-5; 32:1-2

5. idiom of “shadow of the wing,” Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4 (similar metaphors in Deut. 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)
6. idiom of “shadow of a tree,” Jdgs. 9:15; Ezek. 17:23; 31:6,17; Dan. 4:12; Hosea 14:7

SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE NAME” OF YHWH

The use of “the name” as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of “angel,” who is said to have “My name is in Him.” This same substitution can be seen in the use of “His glory” (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of “the name” representing YHWH’s divine essence and personal presence.

1. Deut. 12:5; II Sam. 7:13; I Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6,11,26

The concept of “calling on” (i.e., worshipping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis.

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22-23, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause My name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel (“since My name is in him”)
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or “called out”) the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH’s character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13)

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12); Moses knows YHWH’s name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses’ name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God’s glory (cf. v. 18), but God allows him to see “His goodness” (v. 19), which is parallel to “the name” (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy “the names” of Canaan’s gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name.

1. Gen. 12:3

2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6
4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Psalm 4 considered an evening Psalm and Psalm 5 a morning Psalm?
2. List the attributes of YHWH from verses 4-6.
3. The life of faith is described as a road/path/way. Why?
4. Describe the wicked from verses 4-6 and 9-10.

PSALM 6

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer For Mercy in Time of Trouble	A Prayer of Faith in Time of Distress	Prayer for Healing From a Severe Illness	A Prayer for Help in Time of Trouble	Supplication in Time of Trial
<p><u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David”</p>				
6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3
6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5
6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-8a
6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8b-10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-3

- ¹**O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
 Nor chasten me in Your wrath.**
- ²**Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I *am* pining away;
 Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.**
- ³**And my soul is greatly dismayed;
 But You, O LORD—how long?**

6:1 There are two IMPERATIVES used as JUSSIVES.

1. rebuke – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* negated, cf. Ps. 38:1
2. chasten – BDB 415, KB 418, *Piel* negated

This is a penitential psalm, as are Psalm 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1289) says that this Psalm of supplication has become the liturgical weekday morning prayer of Jewish people.

▣ **“in Your anger. . .in Your wrath”** The psalm does not say why YHWH is angry. It may reflect the OT theology of one causation. The psalmist had enemies, YHWH allowed/sent them (cf. v. 3). Life’s circumstances are

1. punishment for sin (cf. Ps. 41:4)
2. life in a fallen world (cf. Ps. 147:3)
3. ways to strengthen faith (cf. I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 5:8)

However, one never knows which it is, so repent and have faith!

6:2-3 Notice how “dismayed” (BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* PERFECT) is related to both

1. my bones (BDB 782), v. 2
2. my soul (lit. *nephesh*, BDB 659, cf. v. 4), v. 3 (see full note at Ps. 3:2)

Both of these were ways of referring to a person’s innermost life and thoughts. This writer is in great distress and does not know why!

6:2 As verse 1 asks YHWH for what not to do, verse 2 asks YHWH to (also note v. 4)

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. heal me – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The VERB “heal” does not necessarily relate to a physical illness (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1166, c, cf. Isa. 1:5-6), but to the attack of adversaries (cf. vv. 7b, 10). However, verse 2 leaves open the possibility of an illness. If an illness, why are adversaries mentioned? Some would say the enemies made fun of the psalmist (cf. Psalm 102:8) in his illness. The ancient Israelites believed sin and sickness were related.

6:3 “how long” This is the cry of the human person made in God’s image but trapped in a fallen mind, body, and world (cf. Ps. 13:1; 74:10; 90:13)! As believers we trust in God, not circumstances, but still we cry out—why? When will it be over?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:4-5

**⁴Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your lovingkindness.
⁵For there is no mention of You in death;
In Sheol who will give You thanks?**

6:4 As verse 2 asks YHWH to act on the psalmist’s behalf (i.e., “be gracious. . .heal”) so too, verse 4.

1. return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. rescue – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Notice the reason given for the requests is not the worth or merit of the psalmist but the unchanging, merciful character of the covenant creator/redeemer Deity!

One wonders what “return” in this context means. Did the psalmist think YHWH had departed or hid Himself?

▣ “lovingkindness” See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

6:5 Verse 5 gives the OT view of the afterlife. *Sheol* was a place of consciousness but no joy or praise. The whole issue of conscious existence beyond physical death is developed through Scripture. There are only hints in the OT (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 86:13; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-13; Dan. 12:1-2; Hos. 13:14). The full truth is revealed in I Corinthians 15!

The Hebrew *Sheol* (BDB 982) refers to the realm of the dead. It is characterized by

1. a dark, gloomy place, Job 10:21-22; Ps. 143:3
2. a place of no return, Job 10:21; 16:22
3. a place of no praise to God, Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 38:18; 88:10-12; 115:17 (silence, Ps. 94:17)
4. a place separated from God, Ps. 88:5; 39:13, yet God is there, Ps. 139:8; Pro. 15:11!

See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

Notice the author specifically mentions that in his understanding of *Sheol*, there is no

1. remembrance (BDB 271)
2. praise (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa. 38:18)

The *Tyndale OT Commentary Series* (vol. 15, p. 78) lists the imagery used in the OT for *Sheol*.

1. vast cavern – Ezek. 32:18-32
2. stronghold – Ps. 9:13; 107:18; Matt. 16:18
3. dark wasteland – Job 10:22
4. a huge beast with a large mouth – Isa. 5:14; Jonah 2:2; Hab. 2:5

Thank God for a New Testament!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:6-7

**⁶I am weary with my sighing;
Every night I make my bed swim,
I dissolve my couch with my tears.
⁷My eye has wasted away with grief;
It has become old because of all my adversaries.**

6:6-7 The psalmist describes his physical and emotional trauma caused by his “adversaries” (BDB 865, KB 1058, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, “those who show hostility).

1. weary with sighing (BDB 58)
2. bed wet with tears (hyperbole)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:8-10

**⁸Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
⁹The LORD has heard my supplication,
The LORD receives my prayer.
¹⁰All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed;
They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.**

6:8-10 The psalmist comes to a place of mental relief as he trusted in YHWH, who has heard his prayer (cf. Ps. 28:6). This is expressed in three parallel lines (i.e., vv. 8b, 9a, 9b).

Because of YHWH’s acceptance of the prayer the adversaries

1. must depart, v. 8a (cf. Ps. 119:115; 139:19)
2. will be ashamed, v. 10 (cf. Ps. 71:13,24)

3. will be greatly dismayed, v. 10 (same VERB used of the psalmist in vv. 2b and 3a)
4. will turn back, v. 10 (same VERB used of YHWH in v. 4, but here may be of going into *Sheol*, cf. Job 34:15; Ps. 9:18; Eccl. 3:20; 5:15; 12:7)
5. will be suddenly ashamed (same VERB as v. 10a, cf. Ps. 73:19)

Numbers 2-5 are all IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. The psalmist seeks the presence of YHWH but the absence of his foes! What they tried to do to him is now done to them! This literary structure (i.e., reversal) is typical of the OT. What humans expect is often opposite of what YHWH brings about.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe *Sheol* from an OT perspective.
2. Explain what “ashamed” means in an OT context.
3. How does the anger and wrath of YHWH relate to the wicked and to the faithful follower?

PSALM 7

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Implored to Defend the Psalmist Against the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> “A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite”	Prayer and Praise for Deliverance From Enemies	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Justice	Prayer of the Upright in Persecution
7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-5
7:3-5	7:3-5	7:3-5	7:3-5	
7:6-11	7:6-8	7:6-8	7:6-9	7:6-8a 7:8b-9
	7:9-10	7:9-11		
	7:11-13		7:10-13	7:10-12a
7:12-16		7:12-16		7:12b-14
	7:14-16		7:14-16	7:15-16
7:17	7:17	7:17	7:17	7:17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-2

¹O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge;
Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,
²Or he will tear my soul like a lion,
Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.

7:1 “I have taken refuge” This VERB (BDB 340, KB 337) is a *Qal* PERFECT, which denotes a complete or settled action. The psalmist had and continued to seek refuge (i.e., protection, care, provision) with YHWH.

▣ The psalmist asks God to

1. save him – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. deliver him – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

because he has taken refuge in Him (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT). This is a recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 17:7; 18:2,30; 25:20; 31:1,19; 34:8,22; 36:7; 37:40; 57:1; 61:4; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2. YHWH is the only true place of protection and rest!

7:2 In verse 1 the psalmist’s antagonists are called “those who pursue me.” In verse 2 they are described as a carnivorous animal (cf. Ps. 57:4).

1. tear – BDB 382, KB 380, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:12
2. drag away – BDB 830, KB 973, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. none can deliver – this is in contrast to v. 1, where the psalmist pleads for YHWH to deliver. No one but God can!

The psalmist is either using striking metaphors or is afraid of a violent physical attack by his enemies.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT

Often an individual’s or nation’s power is described as being like a lion, the king of the predators.

1. Judah, Gen. 49:9; Micah 5:8
2. YHWH on Israel’s behalf, Num. 24:9; Isa. 31:4; 35:9; Hos. 11:10
3. Israel as a defeated lion, Ezek. 19
4. tribe of Dan, Deut. 33:22
5. David’s power over lions, I Sam. 17:34-37
6. Saul and Jonathan, II Sam. 1:23
7. symbolic protectors of the throne of Solomon, I Kgs. 10:19-20
8. God uses lions as punishment, I Kgs. 13,20; II Kgs. 17:25-26; Isa. 15:9; metaphor in Job 4:10 and Jer. 2:30; 49:19,44; Lam. 3:10; Amos 3:4,8,12; 5:19; Hos. 5:14; 13:7-8; Nah. 2:11-12
9. describe David’s enemies from whom God will deliver, Ps. 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13,21
10. a metaphor for unknown evil, Pro. 22:13; 26:13; 28:15
11. used to describe Babylon’s military, Jer. 4:7; 49:19-22; 51:38
12. the military of the nations against God’s people, Jer. 5:6; 25:32-38; 50:17; Joel 1:6
13. how God’s people treat Him, Jer. 12:8
14. how God’s leaders treat the people, Ezek. 22:25; Zeph. 3:3

15. metaphor for king's anger, Pro. 19:12; 20:2
16. metaphor for the godly, Pro. 28:1;
17. metaphor for the Messiah, Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5

In light of usage #11 and 12 in Jeremiah, Daniel's metaphor of the Babylonian military as a fast moving lion is obvious. Empires of the Fertile Crescent often used lions to symbolize the nation (e.g., the winged lions on the Istar Gate of the city of Babylon).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:3-5

³**O LORD my God, if I have done this,
If there is injustice in my hands,
⁴If I have rewarded evil to my friend,
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,
⁵Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake *it*;
And let him trample my life down to the ground
And lay my glory in the dust.**

Selah.

7:3-5 The psalmist sets up hypothetical parallel situations.

1. if I have done this (but "this" is not specified)
2. if there is injustice in my hands (i.e., actions, see Special Topic: Hand below)
3. if I have rewarded evil to my friend (this may be a well known proverb, cf. Pro. 20:22; 24:29; Rom. 12:17)
4. if I have plundered my friend without cause

If any of these things are true, then

1. let my enemy pursue me – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let my enemy overtake me – BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
3. let my enemy trample my life – BDB 942, KB 1245, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. I will lay my glory in the dust – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE ("glory" in the sense of one's life essence, cf. Ps. 16:9; 30:12; 57:8; 108:1)

This is a poetic way of claiming innocence!

SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)

The word "hand" (BDB 388) has several connotations and usages.

1. literal (i.e., hand of a human)
 - a. symbol of the entire person, 3:18; 18:8,17; 33:6,8
 - b. symbol of human weakness, 7:17,27; 21:7; 22:14
 - c. symbol of foreign enemies, 7:21; 11:9; 16:39; 21:31; 23:9,28; 28:10; 30:12; 34:27; 38:12; 39:23
 - d. literal hand, 8:11; 12:7; 16:11; 37:17,19,20
 - e. symbol of false leaders' power, 13:21,22,23; 34:10
 - f. symbol of a nation, 23:31,37,42,45; 25:14; 27:15; 28:9; 30:10,22,24,25; 31:11; 39:3

2. anthropomorphic of deity
 - a. reception of revelation, 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1 (2:9 is another metaphor – scroll on a hand)
 - b. YHWH’s power in judgment, 6:14; 13:9; 14:9,13; 16:27; 20:33; 25:7,13,16; 35:3; 39:21
 - c. YHWH Himself (His personal Presence), 20:22
 - d. YHWH’s power to deliver, 20:34 (possibly key usage from Exodus, cf. 3:20; 4:17; 6:1; 7:19; 13:3)
3. anthropomorphic of *Cherubim*, 1:8; 8:3; 10:7,8,12,21
4. anthropomorphic of destroying angels, 9:1-2; 21:11
5. symbol of a pledge or oath, 17:18; 20:5(twice),6,15,23,28; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14
6. symbol of joy, 25:6
7. anthropomorphic of an angel, 40:3,5; 47:3

7:5 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VIII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6-11

- ⁶Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,
And arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment.**
- ⁷Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You,
And over them return on high.**
- ⁸The LORD judges the peoples;
Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me.**
- ⁹O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous;
For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.**
- ¹⁰My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright in heart.**
- ¹¹God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.**

7:6-11 The psalmist calls on YHWH to act on his behalf.

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see note at Ps. 3:7). This VERB can mean
 - a. stand up and act on our behalf Judge/Warrior
 - b. wake up in the sense of “pay attention and act” (cf. Ps. 44:23)
2. lift up Yourself – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. arouse Yourself – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 35:23; 44:23; 59:4
4. return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (or understood as “dwell,” BDB 442, cf. Ps. 23:6)
5. vindicate me – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 26:1; 35:24; 43:1

YHWH is called on to allow His anger against sin to manifest itself in judgment. This thought is summarized in v. 7. The Hebrew is difficult.

JPSOA “let the assembly of peoples gather about You, with You enthroned on high”

NJB “let the assembly of nations gather around You; return above it on high”

The question is “How does ‘the peoples’ fit in this context of justice for an individual?” Does this psalm seek justice against

1. personal enemies (vv. 6,8)
2. the pagan nations (Obad. v. 5)

The fact that verse 8 begins with “The LORD judges the peoples” gives credence to option #2, but it is surprising in this context.

7:8 “according to my righteousness” This phrase must be interpreted in light of vv. 3-5. The psalmist is not claiming sinlessness but that he had not done what he was accused of doing!

Notice verses 9, 17 where YHWH’s righteousness is affirmed. The psalmist is longing for the day when God will set all things straight, reveal the true motives and actions of all humans. The Bible is clear that this physical universe was created and maintained by a moral/ethical God. Each human made in His image will give an account to Him of the gift/stewardship of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15)!

▣ **“integrity”** This term (BDB 1070) means “innocence,” “blamelessness” (cf. Ps. 25:21; 26:1,11; 41:12; Pro. 2:7; 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6). It is not a claim to sinlessness but a claim to a pure mind/motive/heart (cf. v. 10b). See Special Topic at Ps. 18:20-24.

7:9 “the evil of the wicked” Does this refer to those who accuse the psalmist in verses 3-5 or all the peoples/nations (cf. Psalm 2)?

The psalmist calls on God to end evil (BDB 170, KB 197, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) and establish (BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* IMPERFECT) righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5).

▣ **“for the righteous, God tries the heart and minds”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 11:4-5; 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 139:23; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). God knows motives of the heart (BDB 480, lit. kidneys; the lower viscera were seen as the seat of the emotions and moral character).

7:10-11 For the faithful follower, YHWH is a shield (see note at Ps. 3:3), but for the faithless follower He is a “righteous judge” (cf. Ps. 96:13).

7:11 “indignation” The VERB (BDB 276, KB 277, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is found only here in the Psalms. It is found several times in Proverbs (cf. Ps. 22:14; 24:24; 25:23).

This verse describes YHWH’s (both *Elohim* and *El* are used in this verse for Deity) continual reaction against sin. This is not the world He intended it/created it to be. Genesis 3 has had a terrible effect on

1. God (cf. Hosea 11:1-4,8-9)
2. humans (cf. Rom. 3:10-18,23)
3. physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-23)

Sin affects time and eternity!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:12-16

¹²**If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.**

¹³**He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.**

¹⁴**Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.**

¹⁵**He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.**

**¹⁶His mischief will return upon his own head,
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.**

7:12 “If a man does not repent” Notice the conditional covenant. Also notice that repentance, like faith, is life long! See the Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

- a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:2; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
- b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek. 24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Samuel 12; Psalm 32,51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern, dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both poles are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Some examples:

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a life-time commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or a faith and repentant response on mankind's part to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem starts with seemingly conflicting passages of the NT:

1. texts on assurance
 - a. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 - b. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
 - a. statements of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13)
 - b. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 8:31; 15:4-10)
 - c. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23; II Tim. 3:2)
 - d. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
 - e. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9; Rev. 2:7,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem of the fallen creation! God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible addresses two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives or (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings of perseverance! Which group are you in?

There is a historical theological controversy involving Augustine versus Pelagius and Calvin versus Arminius (semi-Pelagian). The issue involves the question of salvation: if one is truly saved, must he persevere in faith and fruitfulness?

The Calvinists line up behind those biblical texts that assert God's sovereignty and keeping-power (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:31-39; I John 5:13,18; I Pet. 1:3-5) and VERB TENSES like the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES of Eph. 2:5,8.

The Arminians line up behind those biblical texts that warn believers to “hold on,” “hold out,” or “continue” (Matt. 10:22; 24:9-13; Mark 13:13; John 15:4-6; I Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). I personally do not believe that Hebrews 6 and 10 are applicable, but many Arminians use them as a warning against apostasy. The parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 addresses the issue of apparent belief, as does John 8:31-59. As Calvinists quote the PERFECT TENSE VERBS used to describe salvation, the Arminians quote the PRESENT TENSE passages like I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15.

This is a perfect example of how theological systems abuse the proof-texting method of interpretation. Usually a guiding principle or chief text is used to construct a theological grid by which all other texts are viewed. Be careful of grids from any source. They come from western logic, not revelation. The Bible is an eastern book. It presents truth in tension-filled, seemingly paradoxical pairs. Christians are meant to affirm both and live within the tension. The NT presents both the security of the believer and the demand for continuing faith and godliness. Christianity is an initial response of repentance and faith followed by a continuing response of repentance and faith. Salvation is not a product (a ticket to heaven or a fire insurance policy), but a relationship. It is a decision and discipleship. It is described in the NT in all VERB TENSES:

AORIST (completed action), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5

PERFECT (completed action with continuing results), Eph. 2:5,8

PRESENT (continuing action), I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15

FUTURE (future events or certain events), Rom. 5:8,10; 10:9; I Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; I Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28

7:12-13 God’s reactions to unrepentant people are (cf. Deut. 32:34-43)

1. He will sharpen His sword (cf. Ps. 17:13)
2. He has bent His bow (cf. Zech. 9:13)
3. He has prepared deadly weapons
4. He makes fiery arrows (cf. Ps. 38:2)

This terminology relates to warfare. This lends support to verse 7 addressing the nations, not just faithless Israelites.

7:14-16 These verses, however, seem to relate to personal, not national, enemies.

1. he travails with wickedness (see note below)
2. he conceives mischief (cf. Job 15:35; Isa. 59:4)
3. he brings forth falsehood
4. he digs a pit, v. 15a

(these seem to combine metaphors from birthing and hunting)

But notice the reversal (cf. Pro. 26:27; 28:10; Eccl. 10:8).

1. he falls into his own pit, vv. 15b; 57:6
2. his mischief will return on his own head, v. 16a,b

7:14

NASB, NKJV “wickedness”

NRSV, JPSOA “evil”

NJB “malice”

REB “iniquity”

There is no matching VERB for this NOUN (BDB 19). There are no cognates to this root in the Semitic languages. It is found in poetic passages in the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs.

It may come from a root which denotes “power” or “an abuse of power” (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 310). This is hated by YHWH (cf. Ps. 5:5; 11:5). It can denote inappropriate covenant conduct in

1. worship (cf. Isa. 1:13; Zech. 10:2)
2. politics (cf. Isa. 31:2)
3. the courts (cf. Isa. 10:1; 29:20)
4. warfare (Ps. 56:7)

This term denotes a heart that has a settled disposition against God and His people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17

**¹⁷I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.**

7:17 “I will give thanks. . .will sing praise” These are both COHORTATIVES (vows).

1. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. sing praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 406, #3, suggests that “thank offerings” were accompanied by verbal expressions of thanksgiving (i.e., songs, cf. Ps. 107:22; 116:17; Jonah 2:9). Prayers of lament often involved thanksgiving and praise (cf. Ps. 35:18; 43:4; 54:6; 56:12; 57:9; 69:30; 71:22; 109:30; 140:13; 142:7).

▣ **“the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“Most High”** This Hebrew name, *Elyon* (BDB 751 II) is used often in the Psalms as a title for YHWH (cf. Gen. 14:19; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; Ps. 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 46:4; 47:2, etc.). It comes from the word “high” or “upper” (BDB 751 I). It is linked with YHWH in 47:2, where it is parallel with “a great King over all the earth.” In Ps. 9:2 and 92:1 the exact phrase that is in 7:17 is repeated.

This was the title of the high god in the Canaanite pantheon. It is possible that Israel took this name (as they did the names of the gods of Babylon and Persia) as a way of asserting that their God was the only true God! See Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the theological distinction between “YHWH” and “*Elohim*”?
2. What are the psalmist’s enemies accusing him of in verses 3-4?
3. What does this statement, “God tries the hearts and minds,” mean?
4. Explain the difference between the Hebrew word “repent” and the Greek term “repent.”
5. Explain the literary concept of “reversal.” Why is it found so often in the Bible?

PSALM 8

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD'S Glory and Man's Dignity <u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; on the Gittith." A Psalm of David"	The Glory of the LORD in Creation	Hymn Celebrating God's Glory and the God-given Dignity of Human Beings	God's Glory and Human Dignity	The Power of God's Name
8:1-2	8:1	8:1a 8:1b-2	8:1-2	8:1a 8:1b-2
8:3-8	8:2 8:3-5	8:3-4 8:5-8	8:3-4 8:5-8	8:3-4 8:5-6 8:7-8
8:9	8:6-8 8:9	8:9	8:9	8:9

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-2

**¹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
²From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.**

8:1 “O LORD, our Lord” This is a combination of

1. YHWH – the covenant name (BDB 217) for God (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1)
2. *Adon* – the term (BDB 10) means “owner,” “husband,” “master,” or “lord.” Here it is PLURAL. Everywhere else this title is used in the Psalms it is SINGULAR (cf. Ps. 45:12; 57:5; 105:21; 110:1; 114:7, except in 136:3, where the CONSTRUCT “LORD of Lords” is used. This, then, must be an example of the “PLURAL OF MAJESTY.”

They are used together here of one God, but in Ps. 110:1 they are used separately of YHWH and His Messiah (cf. Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42,43; Acts 2:34,35; Heb. 1:13).

Also notice that in English translations the two terms are identified by the capitalization.

YHWH = LORD

Adon = Lord



NASB, NRSV,

NJB, JPSOA “majestic”

NKJV “excellent”

TEV “greatness”

REB “glorious”

NET Bible “magnificent”

This Hebrew ADJECTIVE (BDB 12) is used of things, people, and God. When used of God it is an attempt to describe His incomprehensible grandeur (cf. Ps. 76:4; 93:4).

The NOUN form (no VERB) is regularly used of clothing.

1. Esau’s hair like a hairy mantle – Gen. 25:25
2. expensive mantle stolen from Jericho by Achan – Josh. 7:21,24
3. Elijah’s mantle (symbol of YHWH’s enabling) – I Kgs. 19:13,19; II Kgs. 2:8,13,14
4. a prophet’s hairy mantle (a symbol of his prophetic office) – Zech. 13:4

It can also mean

1. glory – Zech. 11:3
2. noble – Ezek. 17:8

This phrase may be linked by subject (God’s place in creation) and the NOUN “majesty” (clothing) to Isaiah 6:1-4.

▣ **“name”** This stands for YHWH Himself. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“In all the earth”** this refers to the entire creation (cf. Psalm 104; see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2). YHWH is the only true creator, redeemer God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7).

▣ **“Who has displayed your splendor above the heavens”** There are several issues with the Hebrew text of this phrase.

1. The MT has an IMPERATIVE of the VERB “give” (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, “set Your splendor above the heavens” (see Special Topic: Heaven at Ps. 2:4).
2. The UBS Text Project (p. 169, see NIV) changes it to an INFINITIVE of the same VERB, “You have set Your splendor above the heavens” (the UBS rates this change as “D,” i.e., “highly doubtful”).
3. NET Bible takes it as PERFECT or IMPERFECT form, “You who place Your majesty upon the heavens” (p. 857).
4. Anchor Bible (vol. 16, p. 45) takes it as “I will adore Your majesty above the heavens,” by relating the VERB to Ugaritic usages.
5. UBS Handbook on Psalms (pp. 78-79, cf. REB) revocalizes it to “to tell” or “to praise,” “whose glory is told/praised above the heavens” (see Special Topic: Heavens at Ps. 2:4).

Just a personal note, I love this Psalm and the song “The Majesty and Glory of Your Name.” I feel God’s presence in a wonderful way when I think of this message about the incomprehensible grandeur of our God. I do not want an academic issue to take away from this worshipful message. But at the same time, I want to be true to the message of the inspired author! May the Spirit of God help us to know Him, proclaim Him, and live in light of His presence!

▣ **“above the heavens”** This can be understood in several ways.

1. the whole verse is extolling the God of creation
2. God’s praises reach as high as the heavens
3. creation tells/reveals the glory/majesty of its Creator (i.e., the night sky, cf. v. 3)

See Special Topics: “Heaven” and “Heavens and the Third Heaven” at Ps. 2:4.

8:2 “from the mouth of infants and nursing babes” This is obviously hyperbole. These infants cannot speak, yet their very presence shows the glory and majesty of God and His creation. This is the natural revelation of Ps. 19:1-6. Through the things of this creation God is known (cf. Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-16).

This verse from the LXX is quoted by Jesus to the Pharisees watching His “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem in Matt. 21:16.

▣

NASB, JPSOA “You have established strength”

NKJV “You have ordained strength”

NRSV, REB “You have founded a bulwark”

NJB “You make him a fortress”

The VERB (BDB 413, KB 417, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 89:11, *Qal* PERFECT) means “establish” (cf. I Chr. 9:22) or “founded” (cf. Josh. 6:26; I Kgs. 16:34; Ezra 3:10; Isa. 14:32; 28:16).

The word “strength” (BDB 738) normally means “strength,” but in this context it refers to “a stronghold for defense.”

There is a word play between “nursing babes” (BDB 413) and “establish” (BDB 413).

YHWH, the Creator, is revealed in the heavens and in the little ones. All creation shouts His presence and purpose!

The exact meaning of this verse is uncertain, but apparently the little ones who reveal God’s majesty are under attack and God defends and protects them, as He does all who reveal His truths!

8:2b Notice the PARTICIPLES that express the evil opponents.

1. adversaries – BDB 865 II, KB 1058, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

2. enemy – BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. revengeful – BDB 667, KB 721, *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE

See full note on the names of the psalmist's opponents at Ps. 1:5 and 5:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:3-8

³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
 The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
⁴What is man that You take thought of him,
 And the son of man that You care for him?
⁵Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
 And You crown him with glory and majesty!
⁶You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
 You have put all things under his feet,
⁷All sheep and oxen,
 And also the beasts of the field,
⁸The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
 Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

8:3 This verse expresses the wonder of humans as they view the night sky. For many in the ANE it was a source of superstition and fear. But for the Israelites it was the canvas of YHWH (cf. Gen. 1:14-19).

The VERB “ordained” (BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* PERFECT) is also used of God’s creation in Ps. 24:2; 119:90. The next verse focuses on God’s creation of humans (cf. Deut. 32:6). Creation, beautiful creation, had a purpose—a platform for God and mankind to fellowship (see full note at Ps. 2:8). Everything in the Bible between Genesis 3 and Revelation 20 is God restoring the fellowship lost in Eden. It is not by accident that Genesis 1-2 parallel Revelation 21-22!

▣ **“the work of Your fingers”** This is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6.

I recommend reading John H. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, chapter 7, “Cosmic Geography,” pp. 165-178, as a way to orient the modern reader to the worldview of the ANE, so different from our own!

The worship of the sun and moon were common in the ANE. Genesis 1 is a polemic against Babylonian astral worship, as the plagues of Egypt were a polemic against the nature gods of Egypt.

God creates the heavenly bodies (cf. Gen. 1:14-19) and controls them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOON WORSHIP

Moon worship was the most widespread mythology of the Ancient Near East starting with summer. There was both a male and female aspect to the myth. Originally the moon god came from the rape of the grain goddess, *Ninlil* by *Enlil*, the sky god. *Enlil* was cast out of the pantheon and condemned to the underworld for his act, but when *Ninlil* found out she was with child she joined him. The child, *Sin*, was allowed to climb into the sky each night.

The worship of the moon is designed by its different phases.

1. new moon – *Asimbabbar*
2. crescent moon – *Sin*
3. full moon – *Nanaa* (Summerian “illumination” from *En-su*, “lord of wisdom”)

These names basically mean “wise lord” (i.e., *Suen*) or “illumination” (*Nanaa*), worshiped at Ur of the Chaldees. The city itself was often called the city of Nannar. The fertility pair were worshiped at Ziggurats (large pyramids with flat tops) located in the city. The sun god (*Shamash*) was the firstborn of the couple and later *Ereshkigal* (the Queen of the Underworld) and I Nanna (*the Queen of Heaven/sky*).

The cult was spread all across the ANE, but the major centers of worship were

1. Ur
2. Haran
3. Tema
4. Canaan
5. Mecca

Basically this mythology combined the fertility emphasis with astral worship.

The OT rejects astral worship (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5) and fertility worship (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, Ugarit poems). The Hebrews, originally nomads, were very careful to resist moon worship because in general moon worship was characteristic of nomadic peoples who traveled at night, while the sun was much more generally worshiped by settled or agricultural peoples. Eventually nomads settle and then astral worship in general became the problem.

8:4 Note the synonymous parallelism between the two lines of poetry and especially “man” (BDB 60, *enosh*, cf. Ps. 9:20, also note Ps. 103:14) and “son of man” (BDB 119 CONSTRUCT BDB 9, “son of man,” “*ben Adam*,” cf. Ps. 144:3).

The first term, *enosh*, has two meanings.

1. BDB 60 I – weak, sick, frail (from the Hebrew VERB; *Niphal*, II Sam. 12:15; *Qal* PASSIVE, Isa. 17:11; Jer. 15:18; 17:9)
2. BDB 60 II – mankind, as used here without the connotation of weak, quite the opposite

The second term/phrase, “son of man,” is a Hebrew idiom for a human person (i.e., Ps. 146:3; Ezek. 2:1). YHWH gives special attention to His highest creation, made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). Humans are significant creatures, uniquely related to God. We are part of this creation, yet more than the physical! Once created, we are eternal, spiritual creatures.

Humans are a higher spiritual order than angels. I know that sounds ridiculous, but think with me.

1. no angel is ever said to be made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27)
2. Jesus did not die to redeem angels (cf. Heb. 2:14-16)
3. believers will judge the angels (cf. I Cor. 6:3)
4. angels are to serve mankind (cf. Heb. 1:14)

In the creation myth of Sumer and later Babylon, humans were noisy, bothersome, and expendable (see intro. notes to Genesis 1-11), but in the Bible it is just the opposite. They are the focus of YHWH’s creative activity.



NASB “take thought of him”

NKJV, NRSV,

JPSOA, REB,

LXX

“mindful of him”

TEV

“think of them”

NJB

“spare a thought for them”

The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “remember,” in the sense of “think about kindly” (cf. Ps. 9:12; 78:39; 98:3; 103:14; 105:8,42; 106:45; 111:5; 115:12; 136:23). Usually in the Bible, God is

called on to “forget” human sin and humans are called on to “remember” God, but here the psalmist is awestruck with the vastness and beauty of creation and the thought that its Creator has time and concern for one special creature on this one planet! But, this is the intellectual/theological question, isn’t it (i.e., naturalism vs. purposeful creator)?

8:5 The dignity and worth of humans are clearly seen in this verse. We were “made” is a VERB (BDB 341, KB 338, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Eccl. 4:8) which means “cause to lack” or “made him inferior” to only God Himself (*Elohim*). The LXX interprets this as “angels” (cf. Heb. 2:7), but the context of Psalm 8 demands “God” because this psalm reflects God’s creation in Genesis. Although it is possible that the PLURAL “us” in Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7, reflects God’s heavenly council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 82:1,6; 86:8; 89:6,8; Dan. 7:10), and thereby, refers to angels in leadership (cf. Gen. 3:5). However, I think contextually “God” is best.

Notice that *enosh/ben Adam* is crowned with

1. glory – BDB 458
2. majesty – BDB 214

Humanity is the highest creation of God. They were created for fellowship with God. They function as His supervisors on earth (cf. Gen. 1:28). All physical creation is a stage for God and mankind to meet and come to know each other (cf. Gen. 3:8).

8:6-8 As verse 3 surely has a Genesis 1 orientation, so too, verse 6 (cf. Gen. 1:28). Humans were God’s stewards in the Garden (and by implication, all creation). Humans rule (BDB 605, KB 647, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT), subdue (BDB 461, KB 460, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Gen. 1:28), and have dominion (BDB 921, KB 1190, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Gen. 1:28) only in their connection with God! We are stewards!

8:6 “the works of Your hands” This is referring to Genesis 1 (cf. Job 14:15; Ps. 92:4; 138:8; 143:5), as is “the work of Your fingers” in v. 3 (cf. Ps. 102:25). It is interesting that in Genesis 1 God’s creative activities are by the spoken word. Only mankind is made/fashioned by personal attention in Gen. 2:7. See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Ps. 2:4-6.

8:7 The order of the creation of these creatures is parallel to Genesis 1. This Psalm (like Psalm 104) must be read in light of Genesis 1! If Genesis 1-2 were in the Psalms, we would not be debating their genre or literalness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:9

**⁹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!**

8:9 This Psalm ends as it began (v. 1b). The theme and major character of the Bible is God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are “the heavens” and “infants” related?
2. Does YHWH have “fingers”?
3. Why is it theologically significant that YHWH creates the sun and moon?
4. How is “man” in verse 4a related to “son of man” in verse 4b?
5. Is man a little lower than the angels or God? Why?

PSALM 9

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Thanksgiving for God's Justice	Prayer and Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Righteous Judgments	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (Psalm 9-10, A Lament)	Thanksgiving To God for His Justice	God Strikes the Wicked and Saves the Humbled (Psalm 9-10) Acrostic
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; on Muth-labben. A Psalm of David"				
9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1 (<i>Aleph</i>) 9:2
9:3-6	9:3-5	9:3-4 9:5-6	9:3-4 9:5-6	9:3-4 (<i>Bet</i>) 9:5-6 (<i>Gimel</i>)
9:7-10	9:6-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 (<i>He</i>) 9:9-10 (<i>Waw</i>)
9:11-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 (<i>Zain</i>) 9:13-14 (<i>Het</i>) 9:15-16 (<i>Tet</i>)
9:17-20	9:17-18 9:19-20	9:17 9:19-20	9:17-18 9:19-20	9:17 (<i>Yod</i>) 9:18 (<i>Kaph</i>) 9:19-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) asserts that Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 form a loose acrostic (cf. LXX).
- B. Acrostics are a specialized type of poetry. In order to make each letter fit
1. rare words used
 2. rare forms of words used
 3. strained lines of poetry occur
 4. unusual metaphor and figurative language occurs
 5. use of PREPOSITIONS

The ancients felt the alphabet had magical significance (i.e., Kabala, Ras Shamra texts).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-2

¹I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
²I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

9:1-2 This opening strophe has five COHORTATIVES.

1. I will give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will tell – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
4. I will exult – BDB 763, KB 836, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. I will sing, praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

All of these relate to YHWH (i.e., the Most High). Thanksgiving and praise are the duty of mankind. These are signs/evidences of an intimate, personal, daily relationship with God.

Notice the four “I wills” of vv. 1-2 are based on the five “You have’s” of vv. 4-6. YHWH has acted! Now His followers can praise Him!

9:1 “with all my heart” This was a Hebrew idiom of complete devotion (cf. Ps. 86:12; 111:1; 138:1); I Kgs. 8:23,61; 11:4; I Chr. 28:9. For “heart” see Special Topic at Ps. 4:7.



NASB, NJB,

JPSOA “wonders”

NKJV “marvelous works”

NRSV, REB,

LXX “wonderful deeds”

This is a Hebrew CONSTRUCT (BDB 481 and BDB 810, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE). See Special Topic below.

TOPIC: WONDERFUL THINGS (אֲלֵפ)

This word (BDB 810) denotes actions that humans cannot accomplish themselves or can even explain, acts which cause wonder and awe (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27; Zech. 8:6).

The VERB

1. the Exodus, Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Mic. 7:15
2. plagues, Deut. 28:59
3. crossing of Jordan, Josh. 3:5
4. past events of God, Jdgs. 6:13; I Chr. 16:9,12,24; Neh. 9:17
5. birth of Samson, Jdgs. 13:19
6. David's love for Jonathan, II Sam. 1:26
7. often in Job, 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5,14; 42:3
8. thirty-two times in the Psalms
9. YHWH's counsel, Isa. 28:29
10. YHWH's acts, Isa. 29:14 (twice); Joel 2:26

The NOUN

1. the Exodus, Exod. 15:11; Ps. 77:11,14; 78:12
2. in relation to the dead, Ps. 88:10,12
3. heaven praises YHWH's acts, Ps. 89:5
4. YHWH's laws, Ps. 119:129
5. YHWH's Messiah, Isa. 9:6
6. YHWH's acts, Isa. 25:1; 29:14
7. end-time actions, Dan. 12:6

God acts in powerful, redemptive ways to reveal Himself to His highest creation (mankind). He wants them to know Him and trust Him. His acts are revelation, the recording of those acts is inspiration, and the understanding of those acts is illumination. YHWH wants the world to know Him!

9:2 "in You. . .to Your Name" These are parallel. Notice the personal element in worship. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:3-6

- ³When my enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish before You.**
- ⁴For You have maintained my just cause;
You have sat on the throne judging righteously.**
- ⁵You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.**
- ⁶The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins,
And You have uprooted the cities;
The very memory of them has perished.**

9:3-6 This strophe extolls YHWH as a Righteous Judge (cf. v. 4b).

Notice His actions toward the enemy.

1. enemies turn back, v. 3a – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (i.e., in battle)
2. enemies stumble, v. 3b – BDB 505, KB 502, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
3. enemies perish, v. 3b – BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. has rebuked the nations, v. 5a – BDB 172, KB 199, *Qal* PERFECT (NET Bible sees this as referring to a “battle cry,” p. 858, #19)
5. has destroyed the wicked, v. 5a – BDB 1, KB 2, *Piel* PERFECT
6. has blotted out their name, v. 5b – BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* PERFECT (i.e., died in battle)
7. has uprooted the enemy’s cities, v. 6 – BDB 684, KB 737, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice how YHWH is characterized.

1. You have maintained my just cause
2. You sat on the throne judging righteously
3. cf. vv. 7-8 (emphasis repeated in next strophe)

It is possible that “the just cause” is YHWH installing the psalmist as King of His covenant people.

9:3 “perish before You” Notice this VERB (BDB 1, KB 2) is repeated in vv. 5, 6, 18. It is used of

1. individual enemies
2. the nations
3. the afflicted (negated)

It obviously refers to physical life but also of eternal existence (cf. v. 6, Hebrew idiom). Opposing God and His people is a dangerous activity with temporal and eschatological consequences.

9:5 “the nations” The same switch from an individual to “the nations” (cf. vv. 17-20) occurs in Ps. 7:6-7. Many psalms written by individuals became corporate in worship liturgy.

Also note that YHWH as Judge is expressed in Ps. 7:7 (cf. Ps. 9:4-6,7-8).

▣ **“has blotted out their name forever and ever”** Notice how the theme of “permanent” judgment is repeated (cf. Ps. 69:28).

1. blotted out, v. 5 (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 69:28; also note Num. 5:23; Deut. 9:14; 25:19; 29:20)
2. forever and ever, v. 5 (see Special Topic: Forever below)
3. perpetual ruins, v. 6 (*Piel* PERFECT, cf. Jer. 25:9; 49:13)
4. the very memory of them has perished, v. 6 (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 34:16; 109:15)

Verses 5-6 remind me of the opening dialog in Malachi 1, where Israel’s very existence is contrasted with the complete demise of Edom as evidence of YHWH’s covenant love. Where are the ancient surrounding nations? They are lost to history, but not Israel!

The VERB “blot out” (#1) may refer to the book of life.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (*‘OLAM*)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *’olam*, מְלִוֶּעַ (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
 - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
 - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
 - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16

- d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
- e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
- 2. future time
 - a. one's life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
 - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
 - c. continuous existence
 - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
 - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:5
 - d. existence of God
 - (1) Gen. 21:33
 - (2) Exod. 15:18
 - (3) Deut. 32:40
 - (4) Ps. 93:2
 - (5) Isa. 40:28
 - (6) Jer. 10:10
 - (7) Dan. 12:7
 - e. the covenant
 - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
 - (2) Exod. 31:16
 - (3) Lev. 24:8
 - (4) Num. 18:19
 - (5) II Sam. 23:5
 - (6) Ps. 105:10
 - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
 - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
 - f. special covenant with David
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
 - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
 - (3) II Chr. 13:5
 - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
 - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
 - g. God's Messiah
 - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
 - (2) Isa. 9:6
 - h. God's laws
 - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
 - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
 - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
 - (4) Ps. 119:89,160

- i. God's promises
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
 - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
 - (3) Ps. 18:50
 - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
 - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:19; 48:4
 - (2) Exod. 32:13
 - (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
 - (1) Exod. 12:14,17,24
 - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
 - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
 - (1) I Kgs. 8:13
 - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
 - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
 - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
 - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
 - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
 - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
 - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
 - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:8; 89:1
 - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
 - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
 - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time ("from everlasting to everlasting")
 - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
 - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
 - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term's meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD

- A. In one sense the title of this Special Topic could describe
 - 1. nature (i.e., creation, cf. Ps.19:1-6)
 - 2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)

This is why I do not think that ultimately there should be a conflict between science and faith, all truth is God's truth. Please see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org

- B. There are two books mentioned in the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)
1. The book that contains all the deeds of humans, both good and bad. In a sense it is a metaphor of God's memory and that one day all humans will give an account to their Creator of their stewardship of the gift of life.
 - a. Psalm 56:8; 139:16
 - b. Isaiah 65:6
 - c. Malachi 3:16
 - d. Rev. 20:12-13
 2. The book that lists those who have a faith/repentant/obedient relationship with YHWH/Jesus. This is a metaphor of God's memory of those who are redeemed and heaven-bound.
 - a. Exodus 32:32-33
 - b. Psalm 69:28
 - c. Isaiah 4:3
 - d. Daniel 12:1
 - e. Philippians 4:3
 - f. Hebrews 12:23
 - g. Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
 - h. also mentioned in I Enoch 47:3; 81:1-2; 103:2; 108:3

These books represent God's faithfulness to His Word. For those who rebel and refuse, He remembers their sins; for those who repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere, He forgets their sins (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). There is abundant assurance and confidence in God's unchanging, merciful character, promises, and provisions. God is trustworthy!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-10

- ⁷But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,
⁸And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
⁹The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble;
¹⁰And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.**

9:7-8 Nations will come and go based on their relationship to the righteous God/Judge (cf. Ps. 89:14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTICE (שֹׁפֵט)

This is a widely used term (BDB 1047) in the OT. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 214, has characterized its distribution and significance.

1. Pentateuch, 13%, human judges
2. History books, 34%, human leaders
3. Wisdom Literature, 22%, divine activity
4. Prophets, 31%, mostly divine activity

Note the following chart.

YHWH as Judge	Messiah as Judge	Israel's Ideal Judges	Israel's Actual Judges
2:4	9:7	1:17,21,23	3:2
3:14	11:3,4	26:8	5:7
4:4	16:5	56:1	10:2
5:16	32:1	58:2,8	59:4,9,11,14,15
28:6,17,26	40:14		
30:18	42:1,3,4		
33:5,22	51:4,5		
61:8	53:8		
66:16			

Israel was to reflect YHWH's character to the nations. She failed, so YHWH raised one "ideal" Israelite to fulfill His personal revelation to the world (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, cf. Isa. 52:11-53:12)!

9:7

NASB "abides"
NKJV "endures"
NRSV, TEV,

NJB "sits enthroned"

Verse 7 is in stark contrast to vv. 5-6. The rebellious nations are temporary but the God of Israel is permanently enthroned (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT (cf. Ps. 10:16; 29:10).

The second VERB of v. 7, "established" (BDB 465, KB 464), is a *Polel* PERFECT, which denotes His permanent throne!

9:8 "He will judge the world in righteousness" Again the theological issue is the meaning of "world" (BDB 385). In Ps. 96:13 and 98:9, this word is parallel with *erets* (BDB 75, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth at Ps. 2:2). It must refer to the "known" world of that day. However, from the NT this concept involves the whole planet (i.e., John 3:16).

9:9 "stronghold" The VERB (BDB 960) means "to be high." The NOUN is used regularly of God as a high, mighty, and safe stronghold or fortress (cf. Ps. 9:9 [twice]; 18:2; 46:7,11; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2,6; 94:22; 144:2). This is an idiom for safety and protection. For the faithful follower (cf. v. 10) our God is our stronghold and there is no other!

Notice the phrase, "in times of trouble," of v. 9b reappears in Ps. 10:1b. It is found only here in the OT. There is some doubt about the meaning of the word translated "trouble" (BDB 131). In Jer. 14:1 and 17:8

it means “drought,” but that connotation does not fit here. Remember words only have meaning in sentences and sentences in literary units.

9:10a This line of poetry expresses a major biblical reality. I have added my comments from Isa. 26:3-4 below.

For the Hebrew word “know” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6.

Isaiah 26

26:3 “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace” Notice the covenantal aspect.

1. The believer’s mind is stayed on YHWH (BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, but used in an ACTIVE sense, cf. I Chr. 29:18).
2. YHWH keeps him/her (BDB 665 I, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT, the covenant relationship has two participants, see Special Topic at 1:19).
3. “Perfect peace” is a doubling of *shalom* (BDB 1022, cf. DSS). This doubling of words is very common in this section of Isaiah.

▣ **“he trusts in You”** The word “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “trust in YHWH” (cf. 12:2; 26:4; 36:15; 37:10; 50:10). Notice that the next verse has the same word as an IMPERATIVE. This is such an important theological concept of the need for a personal relationship with God, not just obedience. Both are crucial!

26:4 “Trust in the LORD forever” For the VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), see Special Topic at 22:23.

The name for Deity in the first line of v. 4 is YHWH; in the second line a CONTRACTION *Yah* and YHWH, see Special Topic at 1:1.

The term “forever” (BDB 723 I), first the PLURAL form and then the SINGULAR form (CONSTRUCT, cf. 65:18; Ps. 83:18; 92:8). This construction, along with “everlasting” (BDB 761), used of YHWH, implies a personal relationship beyond this life (cf. vv. 14,19; Ps. 23:6).

▣ **“we have an everlasting rock”** The word “rock” is a metaphor for God’s unchanging character (cf. Ps. 18:1, 2; Isa. 17:10; 30:29; 44:8).

9:10b What a wonderful statement of YHWH’s faithfulness! This is a repeated theme in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 37:28; 94:14). Believers’ hope is in the unchanging character of the merciful Creator (cf. Mal. 3:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL’S GOD

1. Compassionate (BDB 933) – Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
2. Gracious (BDB 337) – Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60) – Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338) – Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
5. Faithful (BDB 54) – Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15
6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) – Neh. 9:17
7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) – Neh. 9:17,31
8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) – Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) – | Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32 |
| 11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |
| 12. Steadfast love (BDB 338) – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:11-16

¹¹**Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion;
Declare among the peoples His deeds.**

¹²**For He who requires blood remembers them;
He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.**

¹³**Be gracious to me, O LORD;
See my affliction from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,**

¹⁴**That I may tell of all Your praises,
That in the gates of the daughter of Zion
I may rejoice in Your salvation.**

¹⁵**The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.**

¹⁶**The LORD has made Himself known;
He has executed judgment.**

In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgaion Selah.

9:11-12 YHWH is praised because of His justice (cf. vv. 12,15-16).

1. He avenges bloodshed
2. He does not forget the cry of the afflicted

His justice is seen in the evil plans of the wicked by which they have ensnared themselves (cf. vv. 15-16).

9:11 “who dwells in Zion” Zion is the hill in Jerusalem on which stood the Jebusite fortress that was captured by David. He built his palace on this hill. It came to designate the entire city.

Jerusalem, and particularly the temple on the hill Moriah, became the place where YHWH “dwelt,” between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant. This place fulfills the repeated phrase in Deuteronomy, “the place that YHWH causes His name to dwell.”

9:12

NASB	“He who requires blood”
NKJV, NRSV	“He avenges blood”
NJB, REB	“the avenger of blood”
JPSOA	“He who requires bloodshed”

This phrase links to Gen. 9:5-6. Life is a gift from God. One who takes away that gift must give an account before God and pay with it/his/her own life (cf. Deut. 32:43).

Later in Hebrew thought this developed into “the Blood Avenger” (i.e., Josh. 20:3,5,9).

▣ **“remembers them. . .does not forget”** Notice how “remembers” is parallel with “forget” (negated). He will not forget His people!

9:13-14 The wicked seek the psalmist's life (i.e., the King) but YHWH has delivered him. Now he wants to praise YHWH in the tabernacle/temple ("who dwells in Zion," v.11).

1. "that I may tell" – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
2. "that I may rejoice" – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

9:13 "the gates of death" *Sheol* (see full note at Ps. 6:5) is depicted as

1. an open grave/pit (cf. Exod. 15:12; Num. 16:22; 26:11; Ps. 124:3; Pro. 1:12)
2. a carnivorous animal (cf. Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5)
3. a city with gates (cf. Job 38:17; Ps. 107:18; Isa. 38:10; Matt. 16:18) or
4. a prison with gates (cf. Rev. 1:8; 9:1; 20:1)

9:14 "in the gates of the daughter of Zion" There is an obvious contrast between "the gates of death" in v. 13c and the gates of Jerusalem/temple in v. 14c. In the first there is no remembrance but in the second there is praise and testimony about YHWH.

9:15-16 Notice the string of six PERFECTS. The defeat of the enemy army by YHWH (i.e., Holy War imagery of the Conquest) is the focus.

9:15 Notice the psalmist's adversaries are nations (cf. v. 17) and not individuals. Therefore, this must be a king, so the traditional introduction is probably correct.

9:16 In the OT God's character is manifested in time by His actions.

1. grace, mercy, and love toward covenant people
2. judgment and wrath toward their enemies

Notice the reversal of the plans of the wicked. What they planned for others, occurs to them. Justice is built into God's created order.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, JPSOA "snared"

TEV, REB "trapped"

NJB "ensnared"

LXX "trap"

The MT has "strikes down" from BDB 669, KB 723, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (found only here in the OT). All the English translations see it as the *Niphal* PERFECT of BDB 430, KB 432, "entrap" or "lure." The UBS Text Project (p. 171) gives the MT a "C" rating (considerable doubt).

▣ **"Higgaion"** The BDB (212; see note at Intro. to Psalms VII) defines this as

1. resounding music (cf. Ps. 92:3)
2. meditation, musing (cf. Ps. 19:14)

It is translated in Lam. 3:62 as "mutter" (KB 238).

▣ **"Selah"** See note at Psalm 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:17-20

**¹⁷The wicked will return to Sheol,
Even all the nations who forget God. ¹⁸For the needy will not always be forgotten,
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.**

**¹⁹Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged before You.**

**²⁰Put them in fear, O LORD;
Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah.**

9:17-18 As the wicked act foolishly (i.e., turn to *Sheol*), the needy (BDB 2) and afflicted (BDB 776, lit. “poor”) will be helped by YHWH.

9:17 “all the nations who forget God” Most of Israel’s enemies were from the surrounding nations who had some exposure to YHWH. The VERB “forget” (BDB 1013) implies they had turned from the truth and by implication, worshiped false idols.

9:19-20 These last two lines comprise a series of commands for YHWH to act.

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (in contrast to vv. 4b,7, where He sits enthroned on call to action as the Divine Warrior)
2. do not let man prevail – BDB 738, KB 808, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. let the nations be judged before You – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. put them in fear – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. let the nations know they are but men – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Ps. 62:9; 90:5-6; 103:14; Isa. 40:7-8)

9:20 “Selah” See note at Psalm 3:2.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is verse 3 a court scene?
2. How are “the nations” and “the wicked” of verse 5 related?
3. Define the different “gates” in verses 13 and 14.
4. How are *Sheol* and the Pit related?

PSALM 10

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked ----- No MT Intro	A Song of Confidence in God's Triumph Over Evil	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (Psalm 9-10, A Lament) Acrostic	A Prayer for Justice	God Strikes the Wicked and Saves the Humble (Psalm 9-10) Acrostic Continues
10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2 (<i>Lamed</i>)
10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3 (<i>Mem</i>) 10:4 (<i>Nun</i>)
10:5-11	10:5-7 10:8-11	10:5-6 10:7-8a 10:8b-9 10:10-11	10:5-7 10:8-9	0.42013888889 10:6-7a 10:7b-8a (<i>Pe</i>) 10:8b-9 (<i>Ain</i>) 10:10-11
10:12-15	10:12-13 10:14-15	10:12-13 0.42638888889 10:15-16	10:12-13 0.42638888889 0.42708333333	10:12-13 (<i>Qoph</i>) 10:14 (<i>Resh</i>) 10:15-16 (<i>Shim</i>)
10:16-18	10:16-18	10:17-18	0.42777777778 10:17-18	10:17-18 (<i>Taw</i>)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-2

**¹Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?
Why do You hide *Yourself* in times of trouble?
²In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;
Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.**

10:1 This is a common question for faithful believers in a fallen world. Evil and suffering are often surprises and unexpected events. Why would our loving, merciful God allow this?

There is no biblical answer except that we live in a fallen world. This is not the world God intended it to be, nor is it the world it will be in the future. As a theologian I must assert that God has allowed us to reap the consequences of both Adam/Eve's sin and our personal choices. Yet He has aggressively acted on our behalf in redemption! The best book on the subject of evil and suffering in this life/world, which truly takes it seriously, is John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God*.

▣ The psalmist asks two specific questions (“why”) about God’s apparent absence.

1. stand far off – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. hide *Yourself* – BDB 761, KB 834, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 27:9; 55:1; 69:17

YHWH promised to be present and involved with His covenant people but He seems to be absent and purposefully inactive (cf. vv. 5a,11)!

Notice the sound play and parallelism so characteristic of ANE poetry (see Appendix: Hebrew Poetry). These charges are not reality but the emotions of confused and hurting believers.

10:2 Notice the characteristics of the wicked.

1. pride/arrogance – BDB 144, cf. Ps. 31:18,23; 36:11; 73:6
2. hotly pursue – BDB 196, KB 223, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Gen. 31:36; I Sam. 17:53; Lam. 4:19
3. devise plots – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PERFECT

This is developed further in the next strophes (vv. 3-4 and 5-11).

▣ **“Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised”** This is translated by NASB as a JUSSIVE (BDB 1074, KB 1779, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense), as should v. 15b.

This expresses a typical OT motif of “role reversal.” What is expected does not occur because of God’s presence.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:3-4

**³For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire,
And the greedy man curses *and* spurns the LORD.
⁴The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*.
All his thoughts are, “There is no God.”**

10:3-4 This strophe further describes (1) pagans, (2) atheists, or at least (3) the “practical atheism” of the psalmist’s enemies (i.e., other Israelites).

1. curses the LORD – but a few times in the sense of “curse,” (lit. “bless,” BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. I Kgs. 21:10,13; Job 1:5; 2:9)
2. spurns the LORD – BDB 610, KB 658, *Piel* PERFECT
3. does not seek the LORD – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT

4. assumes there is no God – “no,” BDB 34 II, “God,” BDB 43 (phrase has no VERB), cf. Ps. 10:5a,11; 14:1; 53:1; this is not a philosophical issue but a practical issue. Everyone in the ANE believed in a spiritual realm. JPSOA translates the phrase as “God does not care.”

10:3a The fall of Genesis 3 has turned the heart of the creature away from the Creator and onto himself/herself. Our lives are spent seeking selfish things, positions, and power. Augustine put it well when he wrote about every human being created with a God-shaped hole. Nothing but God can fill that need but fallen humanity tries to fill it with temporal/earthly things.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:5-11

**⁵His ways prosper at all times;
Your judgments are on high, out of his sight;
As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.
⁶He says to himself, “I will not be moved;
Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity.”
⁷His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.
⁸He sits in the lurking places of the villages;
In the hiding places he kills the innocent;
His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate.
⁹He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair;
He lurks to catch the afflicted;
He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.
¹⁰He crouches, he bows down,
And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones.
¹¹He says to himself, “God has forgotten;
He has hidden His face; He will never see it.”**

10:5-11 This strophe describes the seeming unfairness of life. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer! The same issue is addressed in the book of Job, Psalm 73, and Habakkuk. The wicked are characterized as:

1. prospers at all times – the VERB (BDB 298 II, KB 311, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is lit. “be firm,” but is used in the sense of wealth, cf. Gen. 34:29; Num. 31:9; Deut. 8:17,18; Job 5:5; 15:29; 20:15,18; 31:25; Ps. 49:6,10; 62:10; 73:12; Isa. 8:4; 10:14; 30:6; 60:5; 61:6; Micah 4:13
2. snorts at his adversaries – BDB 806, KB 916, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, this sense is found only here but the word is often used of liars in Proverbs (cf. Pro. 6:19; 14:5,25; 19:5,9)
3. I shall not be moved – BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT meaning my situation of prosperity and safety will never be changed
4. his mouth is full of (i.e., the mouth reveals the heart; Paul quotes this verse in his litany of OT texts that reveal the universality of human sin, cf. Rom. 3:14)
 - a. curses
 - b. deceit
 - c. oppression
 - d. mischief
 - e. wickedness
5. he ambushes the innocent like a wild animal (cf. vv. 8-10; Lam. 3:10-11)

6. he believes and asserts the very words of the psalmist from v. 1. God is absent and irrelevant! The psalmist's words were a cry of faith, but these are the assertions of an unbeliever (cf. Ps. 39:1-2).

10:5b This line of poetry refers to God as far away and irrelevant (cf. vv. 4b,11).

10:8 “villages” This does not seem to fit the context. NJB changes the vowels to “of the rushes” (UBS Text Project, p. 174, gives “village” a “B” rating, meaning “some doubt”). The NET Bible translates it as “near the villages” (MT, “in the villages”).



NASB, REB	“unfortunate”
NASB margin	“poor”
NKJV, NRSV	“helpless”
JPSOA	“hapless”
LXX	“needy”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 319, KB 319) occurs only in this chapter in the Psalms, and only three times in all the OT. I think all three uses refer to a person being attacked.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-15

- ¹²**Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand.
Do not forget the afflicted.**
- ¹³**Why has the wicked spurned God?
He has said to himself, “You will not require *it*.”**
- ¹⁴**You have seen *it*, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand.
The unfortunate commits *himself* to You;
You have been the helper of the orphan.**
- ¹⁵**Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,
Seek out his wickedness until You find none.**

10:12 This verse describes the stealth (*Qere*) of a wild animal seeking prey.

10:12-15 This is a prayer for God to act.

1. arise – (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) from Your throne or as the Divine Warrior
2. lift up Your hand – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. do not forget the afflicted – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 9:12 and 19 contrast Ps. 10:11!
4. break the arm of the wicked – BDB 990, KB 1402, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., break the power of this/these evil person/people)
5. seek out – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The psalmist wants God to act on behalf of the faithful believer to show the unbeliever his/her folly!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:16-18

- ¹⁶**The LORD is King forever and ever;
Nations have perished from His land.**
- ¹⁷**O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;
You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear**

**¹⁸To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,
So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.**

10:16-18 This strophe affirms the character of the God of Israel, the Creator, Redeemer God.

1. YHWH is King forever and ever (cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 9:7; 29:10; 146:10; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19). For “forever” see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5.
2. YHWH gave the Israelites the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). The focus on “the nations” resumes the thought from Ps. 9:17-20.
3. YHWH hears and acts on behalf of the humble/afflicted believer (note the PERFECT, YHWH will and does hear).
4. YHWH acts on behalf of the socially powerless and vulnerable (i.e., reflects Deuteronomy).
5. YHWH will remove the arrogant unbeliever and his/her deeds from the earth.

See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God at Ps. 9:10b.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is verse 4 describing an atheist?
2. What is the person of verse 6 asserting?
3. What is the person of verses 11 and 13b asserting?
4. How is verse 18 related to Deuteronomy?

PSALM 11

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD a Refuge and Defense	Faith in the LORD'S Righteousness	Confidence in God's Concern for Justice	Confidence in the LORD	The Confidence of the Upright
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A psalm of David"				
11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1
				11:2-3
11:4-7	11:4-6	11:4-7	11:4-5	11:4
				11:5-6
			11:6-7	
	11:7			11:7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-3

¹In the LORD I take refuge;
How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;
²For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

**³If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?"**

11:1 “refuge” See notes at Ps. 2:12; 5:11. This (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT) is a wonderful recurrent metaphor of protection and security (cf. Ps. 34:22; 37:40; Ezek. 7:15-16).

David’s advisors (or enemies) said, “run” (v. 1b), but David said, “why run?” (vv. 1a, 2-3). God is our refuge and He knows what we are going through. He is with us and for us. Look at Him and not the circumstances!

▣ **“flee as a bird to your mountain”** The MT has the PLURAL (BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), but the *Qere* reading is SINGULAR.

It seems that the wicked (i.e., PLURAL VERB) are addressing the faithful to flee to YHWH’s protection (i.e., “refuge” and “mountain” are parallel, cf. Ps. 121:1). The phrase is, therefore, a taunt.

The UBS *Handbook* says verses 1 and 4 occur at the temple and, therefore, it is the psalmist’s friends/co-worshippers who call on him to flee in silence to a desert fortress.

I think “the foundations” of v. 3 is also parallel to “refuge” and “mountains.” They refer to the presence and truth of YHWH (cf. Ps. 87:1; 119:152) with His people, which the wicked deny.

11:2-3 It is possible to view these verses in two ways.

1. the advice of (a) the wicked or (b) friends at worship continue through v. 3
2. the psalmist answers those who call on him to flee in v. 1b

11:2 This describes the malicious activity and plans of the wicked.

1. bend the bow – BDB 201, KB 131, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 7:12; 37:14
2. make ready the arrow – BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 64:3
3. shoot – BDB 434, KB 436, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 64:6

▣ **“the upright in heart”** There are no sinless humans. However, there are obviously two kinds.

1. those who seek YHWH and live to please Him
2. those who live for themselves as if there were no covenant or covenant God

11:3 The righteous person’s only hope is the truth and presence of YHWH. He is the only source of help! If there is no God (cf. Ps. 10:4; 14:1; 36:1) then the faithful follower is the fool, but if there is an ethical Creator before whom all conscious life must stand and give an account (cf. v. 4b-f), then the disobedient, wicked, self-centered human (pagan or Israelite) is the fool!

There is a possibility that the second line of v. 3 refers to God (i.e., “the Just One,” cf. AB, p. 69, and footnote in Jewish Study Bible, p. 1294). See verse 5, where YHWH and righteous (BDB 843) may be in opposition; both are titles for the God of Israel.

▣ **“foundations”** The etymology of this word/root, נשׁ (BDB 1011, KB 1666-1667). It is a rare word but consensus is that it refers to the covenant laws. KB has the latest scholarly speculations.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:4-7

**⁴The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.**

**⁵The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.**

**⁶Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.
⁷For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness;
The upright will behold His face.**

11:4-7 This strophe answers the implied question of the wicked in v. 1b. As it happens, “the foundations” of v. 3b are not destroyed!

11:4 YHWH dwells in heaven (see Special Topic at Ps. 8:1), but He manifests Himself (i.e., makes Himself available) between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the ark of the covenant (cf. Isa. 66:1). Heaven and earth meet in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem.

11:4b-5a YHWH knows (IMPERFECTS which denote characteristic actions)

1. what happens on earth
2. the motives of the human heart

He tests (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 7:18; Ps. 7:9; 26:2; 139:1,23) the sins of men (*ben Adam*), both the righteous and the wicked. The NT records the event in Matt. 12:36-37; 16:27; 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16; 14:10,12; I Pet. 4:5; and Rev. 20:11-15. God’s testing is both in time (temporal) and beyond time (eschatological). Often we do reap in this life what we sow, but if not, a day is coming!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD TESTS HIS PEOPLE

The term “test” (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PERFECT) is used in the sense of “to try.” It is used in the sense of bringing someone to the place whereby they recognize and act on their own stated priorities. It is obvious from Genesis 12 through 22 that God is presenting Abraham with a series of situations (the rabbis say ten) in order to focus his love and trust into God and God alone. These tests were not so much for God’s sake, but for Abraham’s sake and his understanding of the God who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham is asked to give up family, home, friends, inheritance, tradition and even the future (his promised son) to follow God by faith. God tests all of His children in the area of their priority (cf. Matt. 4:1ff; Heb. 5:8; 12:5-13).

God tests (BDB 650) in order to know (BDB 393). Israel often tested God by their disobedience and God proved to be true to His word. Now God will give Israel and her people a chance to demonstrate their spoken allegiance and faith.

1. God tested His people corporately
 - a. Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20
 - b. Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3
 - c. Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4
2. God tested individual Israelites
 - a. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-12
 - b. Hezekiah, II Chr. 32:31
3. The Psalm writers cry out for God to test them so as to remove any hidden flaws (cf. 26:2; 139:23).
4. The NT people of God are equally tested, as was Jesus (Matthew 4; Luke 4; Heb. 5:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY

This phrase, “in that day” or “on that day,” is a way for the eighth century prophets to speak of God’s visitation (presence), both for judgment and restoration.

Hosea		Amos		Micah	
positive	negative	positive	negative	positive	negative
1:11	1:5		1:14 (2)		2:4
	2:3		2:16		3:6
2:15			3:14	4:6	
			5:18 (2)		
			5:20		
2:16			6:3		5:10
2:21	3:18 (2)		8:3		7:4
	5:9		8:9 (2)	7:11 (2)	
	7:5		8:10	7:12	
	9:5	9:11	8:13		
10:14					

This pattern is typical of the prophets. God is going to act against sin in time, but He also offers a day of repentance and forgiveness to those who change their hearts and actions! God’s purpose of redemption and restoration will be accomplished! He will have a people who reflect His character. The purpose of creation (fellowship between God and humanity) will be fulfilled!

11:5 “His soul hates” This is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6. See Exod. 15:9; Isa. 1:14; Jer. 5:9,29; 6:8; 9:9; 32:41; Ezek. 23:18 for the same use of *nephesh* (BDB 659, see note at Ps. 3:2).

It is possible that this verse deals with only the wicked and that “the righteous” is a title for God (cf. v. 3b). If so, YHWH and “the Just One” are in apposition (cf. vv. 3b, 7a).

The OT lists several things YHWH hates.

1. idolatry – Deut. 12:31; 16:22; Jer. 44:4; Hos. 9:15
2. all who do iniquity – Ps. 5:5
3. one who loves violence – Ps. 11:5
- 4-9. see lists in Pro. 6:10-19 (also note Zech. 8:16-17)
10. the false, sham worship of Israel – Isa. 1:14; Amos 5:1; 6:8
11. divorce – Mal. 2:16

11:6

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB,

LXX

NET Bible

“He will rain”

“May the LORD rain down”

The VERB (BDB 565, KB 574) is a JUSSIVE which the NET Bible and the Anchor Bible translate accurately, but the other translations assume it is JUSSIVE in form but not in meaning.



NASB, MT,

LXX

“snares”

NASB margin

“coals of fire”

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA

“coals”

The context seems to demand an emendation from “snares,” סָחַפּ (BDB 809, root סָחַפּ) to “coals,” וּמִחַפּ (BDB 809, root מִחַפּ). The UBS Text Project gives “snares” a “B” rating.

11:6b Does this refer to

1. hyperbolic poetic imagery about the circumstances of this life
2. the reality of judgment in the afterlife (cf. Deut. 32:22)

See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

▣ **“fire”** This is a recurrent metaphor of judgment and cleansing.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
8. protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.



NASB, NKJV	“burning wind”
NRSV, TEV,	
NJB, JPSOA,	
REB	“scorching wind”
LXX	“a wind of a tempest”
NET	“whirlwind”

This rare term (BDB 273) basically means “heat.” It is used in

1. Psalm 11:6 – describing a wind
2. Psalm 119:53 – as burning indignation
3. Lamentation 5:10 – as burning famine

The interpretive question is, “Does this term continue the series of NOUNS (BDB 809, 77, 172, cf. Job 1:16) or start a new metaphor?”

1. destructive whirlwind (cf. Ps. 58:9; Pro. 1:27; Hos. 8:7; Amos 1:14; Nah. 1:3)
2. hot desert wind (cf. Ps. 90:56; 103:15-16)

▣ **“their cup”** This is a Hebrew idiom for a person’s destiny, usually negative (cf. Ps. 75:8, but occasionally positive, cf. Ps. 16:5). It is associated with drunkenness (cf. Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15).

This same idiom was used by Jesus in

1. Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38,39
2. Matt. 26:39,42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42
3. John 18:11

11:7 YHWH is characterized as righteous (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5, cf. Exod. 9:27; Ezra 9:15; Neh. 9:8; Ps. 119:137; Jer. 12:1; Lam. 1:18; John 17:25; Rev. 16:5,7).

Some of the actions of the righteous God are:

1. He tests the hearts of men – Ps. 7:9; 11:5; Jer. 20:12
2. He judges in righteousness – Ps. 7:11
3. He loves righteousness – Ps. 11:7; 33:5; 146:8
4. He is gracious and righteous – Ps. 116:5
5. He cuts the cords of the wicked – 129:4
6. He is righteous in all His ways – Ps. 145:7; Dan. 9:14

11:7b “The upright will behold His face” One wonders if this is the source of Jesus’ words in Matt. 5:8. God is holy (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48). No one can see God and live (i.e., Exod. 33:11,17-23), yet those who are pronounced righteous in Him/Jesus will have intimate fellowship with Deity (cf. Job 19:25-27; 27:4; Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; I John 3:2)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does “take refuge” mean?
2. Explain verse 3 in your own words.
3. From verse 4, where is YHWH, heaven or the temple?
4. Does YHWH test humans (v. 5)?
How and why?

PSALM 12

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God a Helper Against the Treacherous	Man's Treachery and God's Constancy	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	Prayer for Help	Against a Treacherous World
<p><u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A psalm of David"</p>				
12:1-5	12:1-2 12:3-5	12:1-2 12:3-4 12:5-6	12:1-2 12:3-4 12:5	12:1-2 12:3-5
12:6-8	12:6-7 12:8	12:7-8	12:6 12:7-8	12:6 12:7-8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-5

¹Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be,
 For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

²They speak falsehood to one another;
 With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,

The tongue that speaks great things;

⁴Who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail;

Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”

**⁵“Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy,
Now I will arise,” says the LORD; “I will set him in the safety for which he longs.”**

12:1 “Help, LORD” What a powerful cry for help (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). In the OT this term has the implication of physical deliverance but in the NT it takes on the emphasis of spiritual salvation. See Special Topic: Salvation in the OT at Ps. 13:5-6.

I have often thought how sad it would be for someone to be physically delivered (i.e., health, war, financial) but miss the joy and benefit of spiritual deliverance! In the NT healing did not always result in a spiritual transformation. What humans need most is God, not a change of circumstances!

▣ **“for the godly man ceases to be”** Notice the parallelism between line 1 and line 2. These both speak of the death of faithful followers. This is a corporate lament, although the LXX has “me” in vv. 1-2.

For “faithful” (BDB 52 I) see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אמן)

I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

A. the individual and the community

B. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

A. Abraham and his seed

B. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

II. Main root used

A. אמן (BDB 52)

1. VERB

a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)

b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy

(1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14

(2) of things, Isa. 22:23

(3) of God, Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5

c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust

(1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6

- (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
 - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
 - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
 - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
 - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12
- 2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)
 - 3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.
- B. תמא (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth
- 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
 - 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
 - 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:5; Zech. 8:16
- C. הגומא (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity
- 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
 - 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
 - 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
 - 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:1,2,5,8; 119:138

III. Paul’s use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).
- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root תמא.
 - 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
 - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
 - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
 - 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
 - 1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
 - 3. Ps. 118:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from
 - 1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
 - 2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
 - 3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

V. John's use of the concept

A. Its NT usage

The term "believe" is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means "into." This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 12:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *ev* means "in" as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means "in" or "upon," as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means "believe that," gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, "I Am" (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

A. trust

B. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God's revelation)

3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“disappeared”

LXX, NJB,

JPSOA, REB

“vanished”

The “cease to be” of line one is parallel to this word (BDB 821 II), which is found only here in the OT. Some suggest a different root (BDB 67) which is found in Isa. 16:4.

The UBS Text Project (p. 177) offers two ways to understand this VERB.

1. their numbers are greatly reduced (LXX)
2. they have completely disappeared (cf. v. 1a and v. 3a)

12:2-4 Notice the theme of “speaking” (i.e., lips, tongue). The false message of the double-hearted person is contrasted with the true message of YHWH’s revelation (cf. v. 6).

Everyday believers must ascertain which messages they hear are true/false; from fallen humanity/from God (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-22; Matthew 7; I John 4:1-3)!

12:2 “speak falsehood” This is literally “emptiness” or “vanity” (BDB 996). This “emptiness of speech” is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 41:6; 144:8,11; Pro. 30:9; Isa. 59:4; Ezek. 13:8-9; Hos. 10:4).

In some contexts it is used of false testimony (cf. Exod. 20:16; 23:1; Deut. 5:20) in court. In other places it refers to false prophecies (cf. Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 22:28; Zech. 10:2).

One thing is sure, this word characterizes false followers! Their mouths reveal their double heart (cf. v. 2; Matt. 12:34; 15:18; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:45; James 3:2-12).

12:3 The psalmist calls on YHWH to silence (lit. “cut off” – BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) the

1. flattering lips (lit. “smooth lips,” cf. Ps. 5:9)
2. tongue that speaks great things

12:4 This verse shows the true heart of the “double heart” (lit. “a heart and a heart”). The person is one who does not allow YHWH to control his/her life! This is the essence of fallen humanity’s attitude.

▣ **“Who have said”** The NASB Study Bible (p. 751) reminds us that the psalmist often quotes or alludes to the false words of the wicked (cf. Ps. 3:2 and 10:11; also note II Pet. 3:1-4; Jude vv. 18-19).

12:5 YHWH explains why He will “arise” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see full note at Ps. 3:7).

1. because of the devastation of the afflicted
2. because of the groaning (BDB 60 I) of the needy

YHWH is affected by the prayers and circumstances of His people (i.e., Exod. 3:7; 2:25; Neh. 9:9; Isa. 63:9; Acts 7:34). YHWH (unlike the idols) is the God who hears, sees, and acts!

▣ **“safety”** This NOUN (BDB 447) is from the VERB “help” (BDB 446, KB 448) used in verse 1. It seems to be similar to an Arabic root which denotes that which is wide or spacious (cf. Ps. 4:1; 31:8; 118:5). This is the opposite idiom from “narrow” or “stressed.”

▣ **“he longs”** This VERB (BDB 806, KB 916, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) basically means “to breathe” or “to blow out breath.”

1. used of YHWH’s snorting in disgust – Ps. 10:5
2. used of testimony in court – Pro. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9
3. in the cool of the day – Song of Songs 2:17; 4:6
4. used of panting or sighing for something
 - a. place of safety – Ps. 12:5
 - b. vision being fulfilled – Hab. 2:3

The LXX translates this line of poetry as YHWH speaking, “I will place in safety; I will speak freely against it (or ‘him’).” The JPSOA has “I will give help, He affirms him.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:6-8

**⁶The words of the LORD are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.
⁷You, O LORD, will keep them;
You will preserve him from this generation forever.
⁸The wicked strut about on every side
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.**

12:6-8 Contrast the revelation of YHWH with the worthless attitude of the wicked. YHWH’s message is characterized as

1. pure words (cf. Ps. 19:8; 119:140)
2. refined silver (Ps. 18:30; Pro. 30:5)

He is faithful to His word (cf. v. 7). The wicked reveal themselves by their words and actions (cf. Matt. 7:15-23,24-27).

12:6

NASB “a furnace on the earth”
NKJV “a furnace of earth”
NRSV “a furnace on the ground”
NJB “which comes from the earth”

JPSOA “an earthen crucible”

REB “tested for soil”

The word translated “furnace” (BDB 760, KB 833) is found only here in the OT. Many scholars believe it is a technical term from metallurgy denoting an earthen mold in the ground made from dirt or clay.

The MT has “to the ground” or “on the ground,” which seems to refer to an earthen mold into which the refined silver is poured.

▣ “seven times” Seven is the symbolic number of perfection which originated from the seven days of creation in Genesis 1-2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
 3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:12,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7; 21:9
 - o. seven kings, 17:10
 5. Ten – completeness
 - a. use in Gospels
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns

- c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
 - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
- 6. Twelve – human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breastplate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God’s provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 7. Forty – number for time
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 8. Seventy – round number for people
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
 - 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

12:7 “protect. . .guard” These VERBS (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT and BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT) are used many times in the Psalms to express the psalmist’s cry for YHWH’s presence to avail against the opponents or circumstances.

▣ **“from this generation”** This phrase refers to those who

1. speak falsehood, v. 2
2. have flattering lips, v. 2
3. have a double heart, v. 2
4. speak great things about themselves, vv. 3-4
5. devastate the needy, v. 5
6. are the wicked who strut about, v. 8

▣ **“forever”** This may be a title for YHWH, “the Eternal One” (AB, p. 75). If so, it parallels YHWH in the previous line of poetry.

12:8

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“vileness”

NJB

“depravity”

JPSOA

“baseness”

REB

“of little worth”

This NOUN (BDB 273) is found only here in the OT. The VERB form (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1109) means

1. in *Qal*, “be frivolous” or “be despised”
2. in *Hiphil*, “to treat lightly”

If one tries to see how the two lines of v. 8 form a synonymous parallelism, other textual emendations have been suggested.

1. revocalization – “hold vile”
2. different supposed root – “pit”
3. emendation – “stolen goods” (cf. LXX)
4. emendation – “astral bodies”

It seems best in this etymological issue involving rare words, to let

1. the meaning of the whole Psalm
2. the central truth of the strophe
3. the possible parallelism of the lines
4. possible cognate roots

give us the best guess!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is a double heart (v. 2)?
2. What does verse 4 mean?
3. Why are a person's words so important?

PSALM 13

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Help in Trouble	Trust in the Salvation of the LORD	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Help	A Confident Appeal
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"				
13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-3
13:3-4	13:3-4	13:3-4	13:3-4	13:4-5 (6)
13:5-6	13:5-6	13:5-6	13:5-6	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-2

- ¹How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
²How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

13:1-2 Notice the structure of this introductory strophe is four “how long” (BDB 723 II, cf. Ps. 6:3; 90:13) questions.

1. two in verse 1
2. two in verse 2

They are a literary way of expressing the psalmist’s frustration at his current circumstances. He felt abandoned by God.

1. forgotten by God, v. 1a
2. God has hidden Himself, v. 1b
3. personal sorrow, v. 2a,b
4. his enemy is exalted, v. 2c

Notice #1 and #2 also appear together in Ps. 10:11. The theme of a sense of abandonment is beautifully expressed in Psalm 42. The sense of abandonment is only the perception of the hurting psalmist. The reality is YHWH is with us, for us, and will act on our behalf in appropriate, timely ways!

13:1 “forever” This word (BDB 664) is a hyperbolic idiom expressing the psalmist’s feelings of being permanently abandoned by God.

▣ **“face”** This, too, is a Hebrew idiom of personal presence (cf. Ps. 11:7; 17:15; 27:4,8). For some reason (i.e., personal sin, cf. v. 3b or illness, cf. v. 3b) YHWH has seemingly turned away.

13:2 “soul. . .heart” These two are parallel and denote Hebrew ways of personifying the person.

▣ **“all the day”** This idiom means “all the time.” This does not mean that the sorrow lasts only during daylight hours.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:13-4

³**Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the *sleep of death*,**
⁴**And my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.**

13:3-4 This strophe is a prayer for God to answer his prayer questions of vv. 1-2.

There is a series of three IMPERATIVES (i.e., prayer requests).

1. consider (lit. “look”) – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 80:14; Lam. 1:11; 2:20; 5:1
2. answer – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. enlighten (lit. “cause to shine”) – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE; this may be used in the sense of
 - a. God answer my prayer with knowledge of your revelation (cf. Ps. 6:7; 19:8)
 - b. God deliver me from death (cf. Ps. 38:10)

Also notice that NASB has “lest” three times (MT, BDB 814, twice).

1. lest I die
2. lest my enemy brag
3. lest my adversaries rejoice

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:5-6

**⁵But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
⁶I will sing to the LORD,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

13:5-6 This is the psalmist's declaration of faith/trust/belief in YHWH.

1. I have trusted (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT) in Your lovingkindness (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). Trust is a crucial aspect of a true believer (cf. Ps. 25:5; 42:5; 65:5; 78:22; 86:2). See full note at Ps. 4:5.
2. I will rejoice (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE) in Your salvation (see Special Topic at Ps. 3:7), which in context, refers to health restored.
3. I will sing (BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE).

In Hebrew thought death was a descent into *Sheol*, where no one praises God (cf. Ps. Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; Isa. 38:18). See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6. See notes at 6:5 and 9:13.

The psalmist bases his trust on YHWH's character and actions (i.e., "dealt bountifully with me," BDB 168, KB 197, *Qal* PERFECT).

13:6 "has dealt bountifully with me" This VERB (BDB 168, KB 197, *Qal* PERFECT) is used several times in Psalms (cf. Ps. 116:7; 119:17; 142:7). This PERFECT form denotes the psalmist's certainty that YHWH will act on his behalf in the future and, therefore, states it as if it had already occurred.

▣ **"with me"** Interestingly the LXX translates this as a title for God—"the Most High" (cf. NJB). This same change may also occur at Ps. 7:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Verses 1-2 describe how faithful followers feel in a fallen world. Explain this in your own words.
2. Is death a "sleep"?
3. Define and explain "lovingkindness."
4. How does the word "salvation" change meanings from the OT to the NT?

PSALM 14

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Folly and Wickedness of Men	Folly of the Godless and God's Final Triumph	Condemnation of a Cynical and Unrighteous Age (cf. Psalm 53)	Human Wickedness (cf. Psalm 53)	The Fate of the Godless
<u>MT Intro</u>				
"For the choir director. A Psalm of David"				
14:1-3	14:1	0.58402777778	0.58402777778	0.58402777778
	14:2-3	0.58472222222	14:2-3	0.58472222222
		0.58541666667		0.58541666667
14:4-6	14:4-6	14:4-6	0.58611111111	0.58611111111
			14:5-6	14:5-6
0.58819444444	0.58819444444	0.58819444444	0.58819444444	0.58819444444

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-3

- ¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.
- ²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there are any who understand,

Who seek after God.

³They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.

14:1 “fool” This psalm is almost exactly like Psalm 53. This word (BDB 614 I) refers to people who should know YHWH but choose to live as if He does not affect their lives. There were no atheists in the philosophical sense in the ANE, but many of the covenant people were practical atheists (cf. Deut. 32:6,21; II Sam. 13:13; Ps. 10:4,11,13; 53:1; 74:22; Ezek. 13:3). The proverb of Luke 12:48 surely applies to these people.

▣ Notice how “the fool” is characterized.

1. they are corrupt – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* PERFECT (i.e., a settled condition)
2. they have committed abominable deeds – BDB 1073, KB 1765, *Hiphil* PERFECT (i.e., a settled condition)

▣ “abominable deeds” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATION (OT)

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH’s feelings toward Israel’s actions:
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
 - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman that you had previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing man’s clothes (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel’s idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Deut. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8

- c. Job 30:10
- 4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase “abomination of desolation,” which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
 - c. an end-time world leader called “the man of lawlessness” (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or “the Antichrist” (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

▣ **“There is no one who does good”** This is a general statement on the spiritual condition of fallen mankind, even the covenant people. It is elaborated on in vv. 2-3. Notice how fallen humanity is characterized.

1. no one does good, vv. 1,3 (inclusive)
2. no one understands
3. no one seeks after God
4. all have turned aside (see note at v. 3)
5. all have become corrupt

One clearly sees the influence of Genesis 3 on all humanity. Paul put together a powerful litany of verses on human rebellion in Rom. 3:9-18,23. He quotes Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-4; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isa. 59:7-8; Ps. 36:1. This truth is the first truth of the gospel (Rom. 1:18-3:18). The gospel is “good news” in light of the bad news!

14:2 “The LORD has looked down from heaven” YHWH was envisioned to dwell in heaven (see Special Topic at Ps. 8:1), from which He sees and knows all that occurs on earth (acts, motives, intents, cf. Ps. 33:13,14; 102:19; Job 28:24). YHWH, so different from the idols, see, knows, and acts!

14:3 “they have turned aside” YHWH’s covenant was a clearly-marked path/road/way. His people were to stay on this straight (i.e., righteous) and narrow road, but they did not (cf. Exod. 32:8; Deut. 9:12; 11:16; 17:11,17; Jdgs. 2:17; I Sam. 12:20; II Kgs. 22:2; Jer. 5:23; 17:13; 32:40). The turning away was not an act of ignorance but purposeful rebellion!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:4-6

**⁴Do all the workers of wickedness not know,
 Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
 And do not call upon the Lord?
⁵There they are in great dread,
 For God is with the righteous generation.
⁶You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted,
 But the LORD is his refuge.**

14:4-6 This strophe heightens the results of “not knowing” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6). The actions of the wicked against the poor, needy, and those with no social voice or power will be judged by God, their protector (cf. Deut. 10:17-19; 14:29; 24:17,19-22; 26:12,13; 27:19)!

He is their “refuge” (BDB 340, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 34:22). To attack them is to attack Him. He will defend them.

14:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, LXX “do not call upon the Lord”

TEV “they never pray to me”

NJB, REB “they never call to YHWH”

JPSOA “do not invoke the Lord”

The VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) is a common one used in many ways (i.e., a wide semantic field). In Psalms it has several usages.

1. of priests in ritual and prayer – Ps. 99:6
2. of the prayers of the covenant people – Ps. 4:2; 20:10; 50:15; 86:5; 91:15; 107:6,13; 116:2; 141:1
3. the nations do not call on YHWH (i.e., Ps. 79:6) but Israel does – Ps. 14:4; 50:15; 53:4

In the NT this OT worship phrase (i.e., ritual and prayer) becomes a way of denoting entrance into a relationship with YHWH through Jesus (cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

We are a called people who call on the name of the Lord and are then called to service! Prayerlessness is a sign of false faith and practical atheism!

14:5 “There they are in great dread” Literally this is “they feared a fear” (*Qal* PERFECT and NOUN of the same root – BDB 808, KB 922).

Since “there” is undefined, some switch it to the end of the phrase and add “where there is no fear” (AB, NJB).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:7

**⁷O, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores His captive people,
Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.**

14:7 “O, that the salvation of Israel” This is a title for YHWH who dwells in Zion (i.e., Mt. Moriah, the temple). Notice the parallel of “YHWH” in line 2.

This verse is also found in Ps. 53:6, which means it may be proverbial. The LXX makes this first line a question (cf. 53:6).

▣ **“restores”** This same VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) also can mean “repent” or “turn back.” However, in this context Israel is not called on to repent.

There is a word play between “restores” (BDB 996) and “fortunes” (BDB 986). The footnote in the NET Bible has “turns with a turning (toward) his people.”

▣ **“Jacob. . . Israel”** The Patriarch Jacob had twelve children who became the twelve tribes. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel in Gen. 32:22-32.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persists
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)

- C. *El* Preserves
- D. Let *El* Contend
- E. *El* Strives
- F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28)

II. Usages in the OT

- A. Jacob's name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10).
- B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
- C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
- D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 - 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 - 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
- E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
- F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became again the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
- G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

▣ **“rejoice. . .be glad”** Both of these VERBS denote the result of restoration. VERBS in Hebrew take their time orientation from the context. This context is future.

- 1. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE
- 2. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What did the fool mean by his statement, “There is no God”?
- 2. Does the OT teach that all humans are sinful?
- 3. What does it mean “to call upon the LORD”?
- 4. Does verse 7 imply an exile?

PSALM 15

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Description of a Citizen of Zion	The Character of Those Who May Dwell with the Lord	A Liturgy for Admission to the Temple	What God Requires	The Guest of Yahweh
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David"				
15:1-5	0.62569444444	0.62569444444	0.62569444444	0.62569444444
	15:2-5b	15:2-5b	15:2-5b	15:2-3a 15:3b-4b 15:4c-5
	15:5c	15:5c	15:5c	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-5

¹O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?

Who may dwell on Your holy hill?

**²He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.**

**³He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,**

**Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
⁴In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
 But who honors those who fear the LORD;
 He swears to his own hurt and does not change;
⁵He does not put out his money at interest,
 Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
 He who does these things will never be shaken.**

15:1 “LORD” This is the covenant name for Deity from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“who”** Verse 1 is a question which may be a textual marker for a type of liturgy used for those who enter the temple on a feast day.

▣ **“Your tent. . . Your holy hill”** These are parallel which means the VERBS (“abide” and “dwell”) are also. The concept of being in YHWH’s temple permanently (cf. Ps. 23:6b) is eternal fellowship with God that

1. reaches beyond this life
2. involves intimacy
3. has a daily aspect

Psalm 27:4-6 expresses this same thought in a non-hyperbolic way (i.e., “all the days of my life,” cf. Ps. 23:6a).

Also note that in Ps. 5:4b “no evil abides/resides with YHWH,” but the faithful follower desires to live with God (cf. Ps. 61:4; 84:10).

15:2-5 These verses describe (in balanced positive and negative attributes) the kind of person who will dwell with God (cf. Ps. 24:3-6).

1. walks in integrity (“blameless,” BDB 1071, cf. Ps. 18:23,31; 119:80; Pro. 28:18)
2. works righteousness
3. speaks truth (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1) in his heart
4. does not slander
5. does not do evil to his neighbor
6. does not take up a reproach against his friend
7. despises reprobates
8. honors those who fear the LORD (i.e., covenant partners)
9. swears to truth (i.e., a vow, cf. Leviticus 27)
10. does not change (renege on a vow for self interest)
11. does not change interest (cf. Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:36)
12. does not take a bribe against the innocent (cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19)

Notice that all of these characterizations describe how a godly person lives and treats others. To know God is to respect people. Faithful followers are meant to live and love so that the world may come to know and emulate the Creator God.

15:4b “those who fear the LORD” This is a recurrent description of faithful followers (cf. Ps. 25:12,14; 103:11,13; 118:4). They are described in several ways.

1. what they do
 - a. praise, glorify, and stand in awe of YHWH, Ps. 22:23
 - b. walk in His way, Ps. 128:1

2. what He does for them
 - a. explains His covenant, Ps. 25:14
 - b. brings salvation near, Ps. 85:9
 - c. is their help and shield, Ps. 115:11
 - d. blesses them, Ps. 115:13; 128:1
 - e. fulfills their desires, Ps. 145:19 (also “hears their cry and will save them”)

15:5c This is the summary statement. Those who live in covenant with God and their brothers/sisters will never be shaken (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:5; 30:6; Pro. 10:30; 12:3). TEV translates it as “will always be secure.” Isaiah 33:15 seems to parallel the glorification of those who can approach and dwell with YHWH. If so, then Isa. 33:16 is parallel to verse 5c.

The purpose of salvation is not just individual-focused but societal! A love for God should issue in love for each other! We must not separate justification from justice! The Fall of Genesis 3 affected all mankind (cf. Ps. 14:1-3). The image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind was damaged. Mankind has turned inward. Selfishness and independence now characterize his/her thoughts and actions. A new encounter with God changes this focus (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). The new person again has a sense of dependence. He/she lives for God/for others.

▣ **“never”** See Special Topic: Forever at Ps. 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the person who can approach YHWH in the temple.
2. How is “lifestyle faith” related to saving faith?
3. List the five positive and negative characteristics of a faithful follower.
4. Define “usury.”
5. Does this Psalm imply a righteous person will never suffer?

PSALM 16

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD the Psalmist's Portion in Life and Deliverer in Death <u>MT Intro</u> "Mikhtam of David"	The Hope of the Faithful, and the Messiah's Victory	An Act of Personal Faith in God's Power to Save (A Song of Trust)	A Prayer of Confidence	Yahweh My Heritage
16:1-4	0.667361111111 16:2-3 0.669444444444	16:1-2 16:3-4	16:1-3 0.669444444444	0.667361111111 16:2-3a 16:3b-6
16:5-6	16:5-6	16:5-6	16:5-6	
16:7-11	16:7-8 16:9-11	16:7-8 16:9-10 0.674305555556	16:7-8 16:9-10 0.674305555556	16:7-8 16:9-11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-4

¹Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

²I said to the LORD, "You are my LORD;

I have no good besides You."

³As for the saints who are in the earth,
 They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.
⁴The sorrows of those who have bartered for another *god* will be multiplied;
 I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
 Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

16:1 “Preserve me, O God” This is the only IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in Psalm 16. It is an urgent prayer request. From verses 10-11 it becomes obvious that the psalmist is facing death. He requests life but knows that even death will not separate him from God (cf. Rom. 8:31-38).

In this Psalm Deity is called by

1. *El*, v. 1 (general title of God in the ANE)
2. YHWH, vv. 2,5,7,8
3. *Adon*, v. 2

See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“for I take refuge in You”** This is the theme of the Psalm! For “refuge” see notes at Ps. 5:11.

Humans are made in the image and likeness of God Himself (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). We were created for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). We can find peace, rest, joy, purpose, and safety only in Him!

16:2 This is the psalmist’s profession of faith. Verse 2 seems to summarize a previous prayer or confession.

▣

NASB	“I have no good beside You”
NKJV	“My goodness is nothing apart from You”
NRSV	“I have no good apart from You”
TEV	“all the good things I have come from You”
REB	“from You alone comes the good I enjoy”
NET Bible	“my only source of well-being”
JPSOA footnote	“I have no good but in You”

One is tempted to read into this phrase the NT doctrine of justification, but in the OT a better parallel is Ps. 73:25-28. YHWH is the psalmist’s only “good.” The idols of the nations are false (cf. vv. 3-4). The gracious, merciful, covenant God honors those who trust Him and live according to His covenant requirements (i.e., OT – Mosaic covenant; NT – the gospel, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). The result is a life and an afterlife of fellowship with God.

16:3-4 There are many questions about how to understand this verse. The Jewish Study Bible says of them (p. 1297) that “These are among the most obscure verses in the Psalter.”

1. Who are “the saints” (BDB 872) – Some (NEB, NJB) scholars take the last words of v. 2 and bring the negative into v. 3, which makes “saints” refer to “the sacred spirits of the earth” (i.e., the idols of v. 4). See note below.
2. Who are “the majestic ones” (BDB 12) – Because of parallelism they are either positive (i.e., godly ones, cf. TEV) or negative (i.e., Canaanite idols, NJB).

It is possible to take these two titles as referring to the covenant people in v. 3 who become idolaters in v. 4. Many translations separate verses 3 and 4 into separate strophes. The question is, “Do vv. 3-4 form a contrast or an extended description?”

16:3 “saints” This is the Hebrew term *Kadosh* (BDB 872), which is used for

1. the faithful followers of YHWH – Deut. 33:3; Ps. 34:9; Dan. 8:24
2. spiritual beings (i.e., angels) – Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 89:5,7; Dan. 8:13 (twice); Zech. 14:5

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY (שׁוֹדֵד)

I. The Old Testament

- A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
- C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
- D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

II. The New Testament

- A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
- B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
- C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

16:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“sorrows”

TEV

“troubles”

NJB

“teeming idols”

LXX

“infirmities”

REB

“endless trouble”

The word “troubles” (תּוֹבָצָה, BDB 781) is very similar to “idols” (מִיִּבְצָע, BDB 781, NJB). The context is obviously about idolatry. Exactly who is referred to in v. 3 is uncertain.

It is possible to see the term “another” (אֲחֵרָה, BDB 29 I, v. 4) as “other gods” (מִיִּרְחָא, cf. Isa. 42:8; NET Bible, p. 866, #29).

For an extensive discussion see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 860-862 or UBS Handbook, pp. 141-142.

▣ The psalmist who takes refuge in YHWH refuses to

1. pour out a drink offering of blood (of animal sacrifices or a metaphor for wine)
2. take their names on his lips (cf. Exod. 20:3-5)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:5-6

**⁵The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.**

**⁶The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.**

16:5-6 Possibly the drink offering mentioned in verse 4 reminded the psalmist of the idiom of “cup,” which denoted one’s destiny (cf. Ps. 11:6; 23:5; 75:8; 116:13). Usually it has a negative connotation but not here.

The “lot” alludes to the dividing of the land of Canaan into tribal allocations by Joshua, by lot (cf. Joshua 13-19), which is the prophetic fulfillment of YHWH’s promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). The Levites and Priests inherited only 48 cities (cf. Joshua 20-24). They were said to have the Lord Himself as their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:20; Deut. 18:1). However, in Psalm this designation is expanded to all faithful followers (cf. Ps. 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; also Lam. 3:24).

Verse 6 continues this imagery by “lines have fallen to me.” The psalmist asserts that his inheritance is beautiful (i.e., Jer. 3:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:7-11

**⁷I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.**

**⁸I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

**⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.**

**¹⁰For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

**¹¹You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

16:7-11 The psalmist asserts his faith in YHWH’s

1. counsel, v. 7a (cf. Ps. 32:8)
2. instructions, v. 7b
3. powerful presence, vv. 8,11
4. victory, v. 8b

The result is that he rejoices in his security in YHWH (cf. v. 9), even in death (vv. 10-11).

1. He will not abandon the psalmist in *Sheol*, v. 10 (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27)
2. He will make known to him the path of life (cf. Ps. 139:24; Pro. 15:24; i.e., an idiom for daily faithful living; for a similar phrase see Ps. 101:2,6)
3. He will be with him personally, even in *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 139:7-8)
4. He provides in abundance all the psalmist needs

Even in times of distress the faithful follower can know that YHWH is with him/her, for him/her, and will never leave him/her! This faith in YHWH’s faithfulness is our hope, joy, peace, rest, and victory!

16:8b “at my right hand” YHWH’s right hand (see Special Topic: God Described as Human [anthropomorphism] at Ps. 2:4-6). The right hand is proverbial for power and strength. The Messiah is described as seated on God’s right hand which denotes the place of power, preeminence, and authority.

The combination of several elements in this Psalm made it Messianic for the Apostles, Peter and Paul

1. right hand imagery, vv. 8,11
2. life beyond the physical existence
3. title “Holy One”

See fuller note at verse 10.

16:9

NASB, NKJV “my glory”
NRSV, NJB “my soul”
LXX “my tongue”
JPSOA “my whole being”
REB “my spirit”

The Hebrew word “glory” (יְדוּבַכַּ, BDB 458 II) may be a scribal error for “liver” (דַּבְּכוֹ, BDB 458, cf. Gen. 49:6; Ps. 30:12), which, like the heart, denoted the whole person (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 587-588; NET Bible, p. 866, #11). Notice that “heart,” “liver/glory,” and “flesh” all are parallel and denote the psalmist himself.

16:10

NASB, NKJV “Your Holy One”
NRSV, JPSOA “your faithful one”
NJB, REB “your faithful servant”
LXX “your devout”
NET Bible “your faithful follower”

The Hebrew has “your godly one” (דִּי־סָדָה, BDB 339). This word is used often to describe those covenant people who loved, served, and obeyed YHWH (cf. Ps. 4:3; 12:2; 32:6; 86:2; Micah 7:2). When used of YHWH it is translated “kind” (cf. Ps. 18:25; 145:17) or “gracious” (cf. Jer. 3:12).

Because this verse is quoted by both Peter (cf. Acts 2:27,31) and Paul (cf. Acts 13:35) to refer to Jesus’ resurrection, in this Psalm the term is translated “Holy One” (NASB, NKJV). I am not sure how to view this verse in Psalm 16. In context it obviously refers to a godly, faithful Israelite (note the parallelism of v. 10). It could then have been understood by an Apostle as

1. prophetic
2. typological
3. multiple fulfillment

The Apostles looked back into the OT and saw many signs and foreshadowing, as well as specific predictions, of the life, work, death, resurrection, and coming again of Jesus Christ! I trust their inspiration.

▣

NASB, REB “the pit”
NKJV, LXX “corruption”
NRSV, JPSOA “the Pit”
NJB “the abyss”

The MT has “Pit” (BDB 1001) and it is parallel to *Sheol* (cf. Job 33:18; Isa. 38:17-18). For *Sheol* see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6 and the notes at Ps. 6:5; 9:13. Both were ways of referring to death.

The LXX is quoted by both Peter and Paul in Acts to confirm the resurrection of Jesus. There are several places in the OT which assert, or at least hint at, a resurrection (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 17:15; 49:15; 56:13; 73:24,25; 86:13; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Ezekiel 37 seems to refer to a restoration of the nation, not individual resurrection.

Thank God for the full revelation of the NT.

1. Jesus' empty tomb and post-resurrection appearances
2. Paul's discussion of resurrection in I Corinthians 15

The afterlife is a progressive revelation!

The life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed the Apostles' worldview. Their OT perspective was modified. They began to search the OT for prophecies, typologies, and hints of this new reality. Jesus Himself may have started this by revelatory interpretations about Himself from the OT to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who passed them on to the group in the upper room (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define the word "saints."
2. Are the "saints" the same as "the majestic ones"?
3. How is verse 4 related to idolatry?
4. Define the OT use of the term "portion."
Is it parallel to "lot"?
5. What organ of the human body was believed to be the origin of thought and feelings?
6. Is this a Messianic Psalm because verse 10 is quoted in Acts 13:35?
7. Why is biblical faith described as a "path"?

PSALM 17

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Protection Against Oppressors	Prayer with Confidence in Final Salvation	Prayer of Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	The Prayer of An Innocent Person	The Plea of the Innocent
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Prayer of David"				
17:1-5	17:1-2 17:3-5	17:1-2 17:3-5	17:1-2 17:3-5	17:1-2 17:3-4a 17:4b-7
17:6-12	17:6-9 17:10-12	17:6-7 17:8-12	17:6-7 17:8-9a 17:9b-12	17:8-12
17:13-15	17:13-14 0.71875	17:13-14 0.71875	17:13-14 0.71875	17:13-14b 17:14c-15

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-5

¹Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry;
Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.
²Let my judgment come forth from Your presence;
Let Your eyes look with equity.
³You have tried my heart;
You have visited *me* by night;
You have tested me and You find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
⁴As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips
I have kept from the paths of the violent.
⁵My steps have held fast to Your paths.
My feet have not slipped.

17:1 Notice the parallel IMPERATIVES referring to the psalmist's prayer.

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 27:7; 28:2; 30:10; 39:12; 54:12; 61:1; 64:1; 84:8; 102:1; 119:149; 130:2; 143:1
2. give heed – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:2; 55:2; 61:1; 86:6; 142:6
3. give ear – BDB 23, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:1; 39:12; 49:1; 54:2; 55:1; 77:1; 80:1; 84:8; 140:6; 141:1; 143:1

Psalms is a book of God's people earnestly asking Him to hear (i.e., take note of and respond to) their sensed needs.

In verse 1 the words of the one with a just cause (BDB 841) is contrasted to the words of the one with "deceitful lips" (cf. Isa. 29:13).

Verse 1 is parallel to v. 6. All three strophes of this Psalm begin with several IMPERATIVES beseeching God to act on the psalmist's behalf!



NASB, NKJV	"not from deceitful lips"
NRSV, NJB	"from lips free of deceit"
TEV	"honest prayer"
JPSOA	"without guile"

The psalmist is asserting his integrity. He prays with no hidden motives or known lies (cf. Isa. 29:13).

17:2 As verse one had three IMPERATIVES, this verse has two understood JUSSIVES.

1. let my judgment/vindication come forth from Your presence – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let Your eyes look with equity – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense



NASB	"equity"
NKJV	"upright"
NRSV	"the right"
NJB, TEV, JPSOA, REB	"right"
LXX	"straightforwardness"

The MT has “evenness,” “uprightness,” or “equity” (BDB 449). Here it refers to YHWH judging fairly or impartially. The psalmist is asking for the God of justice to render a just verdict (cf. v. 1a).

17:3-5 The psalmist enumerates why God should judge/vindicate him.

1. what God has done (all PERFECTS)
 - a. He tried his heart, v. 3a
 - b. He visited him by night, v. 3b (a & b are parallel with no distinction intended)
 - c. He tested him and found nothing, v. 3c (see Special Topic: God Tests His people at 11:4b)
2. what he has done or not done
 - a. he has not transgressed with his mouth, v. 3d
 - b. he has kept away from the path of the violent (the word, BDB 829, means “robber,” cf. Jer. 7:11, but can mean “violent,” cf. Ezek. 18:10), v. 4
 - c. he has walked God’s paths, v. 5a
 - d. he has not slipped, v. 5b (cf. Ps. 18:36)

The concept of “path” means that the psalmist has followed carefully God’s covenant guidelines (cf. Ps. 37:31; 40:2; 44:18; 66:9; 73:2; 119:105; Pro. 14:15). Wicked people

1. deviate from the path to the right or left
2. stumble on the path
3. have slippery steps

See Special Topic: God Tests His People at Ps. 11:4b-5.

17:3d The UBS Text Project (pp. 182-183) has a good brief note about the options for translating this line of poetry.

“If תמוז is interpreted as an infinitive construct with a suffix, the last part of v. 3 should be interpreted as ‘my plans (thoughts) do not go beyond my mouth’ (i.e., my thoughts correspond with my words, my words confirm with my ideas). If תמוז is interpreted as a verb in the first person singular, the clause should be interpreted as ‘if I devise <something> (i.e. something wicked), <this> should not cross my mouth.’”

Also see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1112, for the same suggested emendation. The change from the MT, “my wickedness” (BDB 273, KB 273) to “I have considered” or “I planned” (BDB 273, KB 273, *Qal* PERFECT) involves only a change of vowels.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:6-12

⁶I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God;

Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.

⁷Wondrously show Your lovingkindness,

O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand

From those who rise up *against them*.

⁸Keep me as the apple of the eye;

Hide me in the shadow of Your wings

⁹From the wicked who despoil me,

My deadly enemies who surround me.

¹⁰They have closed their unfeeling *heart*,

With their mouth they speak proudly.

¹¹They have now surrounded us in our steps;

They set their eyes to cast *us* down to the ground.

¹²He is like a lion that is eager to tear,

And as a young lion lurking in hiding places.

17:6-12 This strophe describes God's actions toward the psalmist and his opponents' actions.

1. God's actions
 - a. he called and God answered, v. 6
 - b. God showed His covenant love and loyalty (i.e., lovingkindness, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - c. God gave him refuge (see note at Ps. 5:11)
 - d. God kept/protected "the apple of my eye" (an idiom of tender care for someone especially close, cf. Deut. 32:16; Pro. 7:2)
 - e. God hid him in the shadow of His wings (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)
2. the opponent's actions
 - a. they despoiled him (i.e., kill him), v. 9
 - b. they surrounded him, vv. 9b, 11a
 - c. they closed their heart (lit. "their fat [BDB 316] they have closed" [BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* perfect], cf. LXX; "fat" is used in a negative sense of people in Ps. 73:3 and 119:70)
 - d. they speak proudly against him
 - e. they set their eyes against him
 - f. they tear him like a lion, v. 12

What a sharp contrast!

17:6

NASB, NKJV "incline Your ear to me"

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA "turn your ear to me"

This is a Hebrew idiom, which when used in prayers, asks YHWH to turn/bend (cf. II Kgs. 19:16; Isa. 37:17; Dan. 9:18; Ps. 31:2; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2; 102:2; 116:2).

YHWH, though a non-corporal spiritual being, is described in human vocabulary. See the Special Topic on anthropomorphism at Ps. 2:4-6. Humans have no vocabulary but that related to this planet and their physicalness. Human vocabulary used of God or the spiritual realm is always figurative.

17:7 This verse has a series of powerful, emotive theological terms related to YHWH's person and mercy.

1. wondrously show – BDB 811, KB 930, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (see related word BDB 810 in Ps. 33:22, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1)
2. lovingkindness, YHWH's *hesed* – BDB 338 (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) which denotes His covenant loyalty and steadfast love
3. O Savior – BDB 446, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, i.e., the one who saves, cf. Ps. 106:7,21
4. refuge – BDB 340, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, YHWH is a strong and mighty fortress for those who take refuge in Him, cf. Ps. 5:11; 18:2

▣ "at Your right hand" This phrase can be understood in several senses.

1. the place close to YHWH where the needy seek refuge, cf. NASB, TEV
2. the means by which YHWH delivers the needy (i.e., His strong right hand, cf. NKJV, JPSOA, REB, see Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4)
3. the close association between the psalmist and his enemies (i.e., close associates, cf. NRSV)

17:9 "the wicked" It is hard to identify this group. It could refer to

1. covenant partners who, for their own purposes, attack the psalmist
2. covenant partners who knowingly violate YHWH's covenant
3. the surrounding nations who ignorantly, blindly follow idols and not YHWH

Only the context of the Psalm and the individual strophe can help the identification. I am not sure “the wicked” realize they are such. Often they think they are serving God in their actions.

In this Psalm they seem to be wealthy, successful Israelites who see their possessions and children as a covenant sign of God’s approval.

17:11 “They have now surrounded us” The MT has the VERB (BDB 685, KB 738) as SINGULAR but it is paralleled in the next line with a PLURAL VERB. So the Masoretic scholars put a marginal note (*Qere*) suggesting it be read as a PLURAL (cf. NASB “us” in v. 11, lines a and b).

I think the SINGULAR (MT) is best. This Psalm is an individual lament., but later came to be used liturgically for the whole community, which is so common in the Psalms.



NASB, NKJV “our steps”
NRSV “they track me down”
NJB “they are advancing”

The Hebrew of v. 11 starts with “our steps” (BDB 81, FEMININE PLURAL, אֲשׁוּנַיִר) but by a change of vowels, can become a VERB, “advance” (BDB 80, אָשַׁר), which is in one Hebrew manuscript, cf. NRSV, NJB.



NASB “to cast *us* to the ground”
NKJV “crouching down to the earth”
NRSV “to cast me to the ground”
TEV “to pull me down”
NJB “hurl me to the ground”
LXX “to incline at the ground”
Peshitta “to bury me in the ground”

The VERBAL “to cast” (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is literally the VERB “incline” (BDB 639, KB 692) used in v. 6, but here that translation does not fit the context. Remember words have meaning only in contexts! Poetry forces words to be used in unique ways.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:13-15

¹³Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low;
Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,
¹⁴From men with Your hand, O LORD,
From men of the world, whose portion is in *this* life,
And whose belly You fill with Your treasure;
They are satisfied with children,
And leave their abundance to their babes.
¹⁵As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

17:13-15 The psalmist calls on God to act on his behalf (v. 13).

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. confront – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. bring low – BDB 502, KB 499, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. deliver – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

Notice the “froms,” which characterize the opponents (vv. 13b-14).

1. from the wicked
2. from men (NET Bible [p. 867, #32] emends it to “from those who kill,” i.e., “murderers” in both lines a and b)
 - a. whose portion in life is of the world
 - b. whose belly is full
 - c. who have many children
 - d. who leave their wealth to their children

However, the psalmist is characterized as

1. one who beholds God’s face in righteousness (idiom of intimacy, cf. Ps. 11:7)
2. one who is satisfied with God’s presence (cf. Ps. 16:11)

Both of the VERBS of v. 15 are COHORTATIVES.

1. see/behold – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. satisfied – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

17:15 As the wicked (and their posterity) are satisfied (BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* IMPERFECT) with earthly things, ill-gotten gains; the psalmist (emphatic “I”) is satisfied (BDB 959, KB 1302) with YHWH’s presence!

▣ **“when I awake”** This VERB (BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in several senses.

1. awake from a special vision of God
2. awake from a night’s sleep
3. awake from drunkenness
4. awake from death

I think #4 best fits the context (i.e., YHWH’s presence, cf. II Kgs. 4:31; Job 14:12; Ps. 23:24-25; 139:18; Isa. 26:19; Jer. 51:39,57; Dan. 12:2). If so, then the ending of Psalm 16 and Psalm 17 are similar!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did YHWH deal with the psalmist’s claim of innocence?
2. How does the psalmist claim that he is innocent?
3. Explain the imagery of “at Your right Hand.”
4. Explain the imagery of “the apple of the eye.”
5. Explain the imagery of “in the shadow of Your wings.”

PSALM 18

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Praised for Giving Deliverance	God the Sovereign Savior	A King Gives Thanks for a Victory in Battle (A Royal Thanksgiving, cf. II Sam. 22:1-3)	David's Song of Victory	A King's Thanksgiving
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A <i>Psalm</i> of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said. . . ,				
18:1-3	18:1-3	18:1-3	0.75069444444 18:2-3	0.75069444444 0.75138888889 0.75208333333
18:4-6	18:4-6	18:4-5 0.75416666667	18:4-6	18:4-5 0.75416666667
18:7-15	18:7-12 18:13-15	18:7-15	18:7-15	18:7-8 18:9-10 18:11-12 18:13-14 0.76041666667
18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-17 19:18-19
18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-21 18:22-23 18:24-25
18:25-29	18:25-27 18:28-30	18:25-30	18:25-27 18:28-29	18:26-27 18:28-29
18:30-36	18:31-34 18:35-36	18:31-42	18:30-34 18:35-42	0.77083333333 18:31-32 18:33-34 18:35-36
18:37-42	18:37-42			18:37-38 18:39-40 18:41-42

18:43-45	18:43-45	18:43-45	18:43-45	0.77986111111
				18:44-45
18:46-50	18:46-49	18:46-48	18:46-50	18:46-47
				0.78333333333
		18:49-50		0.78402777778
	0.78472222222			0.78472222222

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
 FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-3

¹“I love You, O LORD, my strength.”
²The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
 My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
 My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
 And I am saved from my enemies.

18:1-3 The psalmist addresses his God with a series of powerful titles and allusions (same poem in II Samuel 22). In the midst of life’s stresses he knew the unchanging character of the God of creation and redemption. Notice the personal element in the “my” PRONOUNS.

1. my strength – BDB 305, KB 304, NOUN only here and I Sam. 22:2
2. my rock (twice) – two different Hebrew roots
 - a. BDB 700 I – cf. Ps. 31:3; 42:10; 71:3
 - b. BDB 849 – cf. Deut. 32:4,15,30
3. my fortress – BDB 845 II, KB 622, cf. Ps. 31:3; 71:3; 91:2; 144:2

4. my deliverer – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 144:2
5. my God (*El*) in whom I take refuge – BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1; 37:40; 57:1; 61:5; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8-9; 141:8; 143:9; 144:2; Pro. 30:5
6. my shield – BDB 171, KB 545 I, cf. Ps. 3:3; 7:10; 18:30,35; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2; Pro. 2:7; 30:5
7. the horn of my salvation
 - a. “horn” (BDB 901) – an idiom of power or strength, cf. Ps. 75:10
 - b. “horn” may mean “hill,” cf. Isa. 5:1; if so, it is similar imagery to fortress or stronghold (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 991)
8. my stronghold – BDB 960 I, KB 640, cf. Ps. 9:9; 46:7,11; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2,6; 94:22; 144:2
9. the LORD who is worthy to be praised – BDB 237, KB 248, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 48:1; 96:4; 145:3

The accumulative effect of these words of safety, protection, and security is powerful and emotional. Life in a fallen world is hard, unfair, and unpredictable but then there is our God who is exactly the opposite!

18:1 “love” This word (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the same Hebrew root (אָהַב) as “womb,” but before we read too much into this, the same root also means “vulture”! Be careful of etymology as the only source for meaning. Context determines meaning!

The *Qal* stem of this VERB is found only here and refers to man’s love for God. The *Piel* stem is much more common and is used of God’s compassion for covenant humanity (cf. Exod. 33:19; Deut. 13:13; 30:3; Isa. 14:1; 27:11; 30:18; 49:10,13; 54:8,10; 55:7; 60:10).

This VERB is not paralleled in II Samuel 22 and BDB thinks it may have been added, possibly when the psalm became liturgical for the community.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:4-6

**⁴The cords of death encompassed me,
And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.
⁵The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
⁶In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.**

18:4-5 The psalmist describes his distress in vivid, parallel, poetic language.

1. the cords (i.e., snares, cf. Pro. 13:14; 14:27) of death encompassed me – BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 116:3; it is possible that “cords,” following II Samuel 22, should be understood as “waves,” which forms a good parallel to the next line of poetry. The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 482, mentions that the DSS (IQH 3:28; 5:39) uses the VERB for thanking God for deliverance from
 - a. “pangs of death”
 - b. “rivers of Belial”
 This also fits the context here.
2. the torrents of Belial (BDB 116, cf. Nah. 1:15; II Cor. 6:15) terrified me – BDB 129, KB 147, *Piel* IMPERFECT; the VERB is used often in Job (cf. Job 3:5; 9:34; 13:11,21; 15:24; 18:11; 33:7). In II Sam. 22:5 “Belial” is translated “destruction,” which shows it can be non-personal.
3. the cords of Sheol (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6) surround me – BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:11; 22:12,16; 49:5; 88:17; 118:10-12

4. the snares of death confronted me – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:18; Job 30:27
As “my” was prominent in verses 1-3, now “me” as the object of attack is prominent in verses 4-5.
Every human is fearful of death until they have a personal faith encounter with the God of life and love (cf. I John 4:7-21)! Satan does not control death but he does magnify the fear of death.

18:6 Verse 6 is the psalmist’s response to his sense of impending death (i.e., “distress,” BDB 856 II, cf. Job 15:24; 38:23; Ps. 66:14; 119:143).

1. I called upon the LORD – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. I cried to my God – BDB 1002, KB 1443, *Piel* IMPERFECT

His prayers are answered.

1. He heard my voice out of His temple
2. He heard my cry for help before it came into His ears (cf. Ps. 6:8-9; 28:2,6)

Notice the parallelism of lines 1 and 2 then lines 3 and 4. This synonymous parallelism is characteristic of Hebrew poetry (see Introductory Article). The God of protection is also the God who responds to prayer!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:7-15

⁷Then the earth shook and quaked;
And the foundations of the mountains were trembling
And were shaken, because He was angry.
⁸Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
And fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.
⁹He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With thick darkness under His feet.
¹⁰He rode upon a cherub and flew;
And He sped upon the wings of the wind.
¹¹He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
¹²From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
¹⁴He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,
And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.
¹⁵Then the channels of water appeared,
And the foundations of the world were laid bare
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

18:7-15 This strophe describes God’s response to the psalmist’s prayer. God arouses Himself for action (i.e., [1] holy war imagery or [2] rises from His throne)!

1. in verse 7 the distress of the faithful follower causes Divine anger (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6). This burning anger (earthquake imagery, cf. Isa. 29:6)

is characterized in verse 8 (i.e., thunderstorm imagery, cf. Deut. 33:26; Isa. 29:6). It is possible this imagery reflects Exod. 19:18-19 (i.e., giving of the Mosaic covenant at Mt. Sinai).

2. YHWH's response is characterized in the imagery of a thunderstorm in verses 9-15.
 - a. bowed the heavens (cf. Isa. 64:1). The REB revocalizes the phrase and has, "He parted the heavens." This same imagery is reflected in Isa. 34:4; Rev. 6:12-14.
 - b. came down with thick darkness
 - c. darkness of waters
 - d. thick clouds of the skies
 - e. brightness before Him
 - f. hailstones and coals of fire
 - g. thundered in the heavens
 - h. lightning flashes
 - i. channels of water

In many ways this description alludes to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory during the wilderness wandering period, both hiding and revealing YHWH (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 19:19-20,24; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15-18; 40:34-38).

18:7 "the earth shook and quaked" The interpretive question is, "Is this literal or figurative?"

1. literal – their imagery of an earthquake as a sign of God's coming presence, Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:7-8
2. figurative – a personification of "the earth"
 - a. the earth brought forth – Gen. 1:12,24
 - b. the earth swallowed them – Exod. 15:12; Num. 16:34
 - c. the earth spewed out – Lev. 18:25,28; 20:22
 - d. the earth opened its mouth – Num. 16:32; 26:10; Deut. 11:6; Ps. 106:17
 - e. the earth as a witness – Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1
 - f. speak to the earth – Job 12:8; 16:18; Ps. 50:4
 - g. the earth will rise up against him – Job 20:27
 - h. the earth cries out – Job 31:38
 - i. the earth praises YHWH – Ps. 69:34
 - j. the earth rejoices – Ps. 96:11; 97:1
 - k. the earth trembled – Jdgs. 5:4; I Sam. 14:15; Isa. 13:13
 - l. the earth mourns – Isa. 24:4; 33:9; Hos. 4:3

18:8 "fire" See Special Topic at Ps. 11:6.

18:9 "He. . .came down" YHWH lives in heaven. His presence dwells between the *cherubim* on the ark of the covenant, but from time to time the Bible speaks of His coming to humans in special ways (i.e., theophanies, cf. Exodus 3). Exodus 3:7-8 is a specific example of YHWH responding to His people's need and acting on their behalf. In this context the imagery is described as a violent thunderstorm.

18:10-11 This describes YHWH in imagery of a thunderstorm. Rain was important for semi-desert dwellers but storms were frightening. In Israel's history after they entered Canaan the Israelites became influenced by the fertility gods, especially *Ba'al*, the storm god, the giver of rain and fertility. However, the true "storm god" was YHWH (note the imagery of Exodus 19).

18:10 "cherub" Note parallel imagery in Ps. 104:3. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *CHERUBIM*

- A. One of several types of angelic beings. This particular type guarded sacred areas (cf. Exod. 25:18-22; I Kgs. 8:6-7).
- B. Etymology is uncertain.
 - 1. from Akkadian “intercessor” or “mediator” between God and man
 - 4. from Hebrew this is a possible word play, “chariot” and cherub” (cf. Ezekiel 1; 10)
 - 3. some say it means “brilliant appearance”
- C. Physical form – This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the Ancient Near East. Some link them to
 - 1. Winged bull of Mesopotamia
 - 2. Winged eagle – lions of Egypt called “griffins”
 - 3. Winged creatures on Hiram, King of Tyres’ throne
 - 4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab’s ivory palace in Samaria
- D. Physical Description
 - 1. The form *Cherubim* is linked with the *Seraphim* of Isaiah 6.
 - 2. Examples of different forms
 - a. Number of faces
 - (1) two – Ezek. 41:18
 - (2) four – Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14,16,21,22
 - (3) one – Rev. 4:7
 - b. Number of wings
 - (1) two – I Kgs. 6:24
 - (2) four – Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
 - (3) six (like *Seraphim* of Isa. 6:2) – Rev. 4:8
 - 3. Other features
 - a. Human hands – Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21
 - b. Legs
 - (1) Straight, no knee – Ezek. 1:7
 - (2) Calf feet – Ezek. 1:7
 - 4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what *cherubim* looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII.3.3).
- E. Places and purpose found in the Bible
 - 1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)
 - 2. Guardian of the Tabernacle
 - a. Over the ark of the covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; I Sam. 4:4
 - b. Depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35
 - 3. Guardian of Solomon’s Temple
 - a. Two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; I Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7; II Chr. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
 - b. On walls of inner shrine; I Kgs. 6:29,35; II Chr. 3:7

- c. On panels that were associated with the several lavers; I Kgs. 7:27-39
- 4. Guardian of Ezekiel's Temple
 - a. Carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25
- 5. Connected with transportation of deity
 - a. possibly a metaphor for wind; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
 - b. guardian of God's throne; Ps.80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
 - c. guardian of God's portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; I Chr. 28:18
- 6. Herod's Temple
 - a. Painted on walls (i.e., guardian, cf. Talmud "Yoma" 54a)
- 7. Revelation throne scene (i.e., guardian, cf. Rev. 4-5)

18:11 "He made darkness His hiding place" In the OT to see YHWH meant death (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 3:6; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22-23; 13:22; I Kgs. 19:13; Isa. 6:5; Acts 7:32). The thick dark cloud was a way of protecting the Israelites (cf. Exod. 19:9; 20:21; Deut. 4:11; 5:23).

18:15 "the foundations of the world" This imagery is expressed as

1. the pillars of the earth – I Sam. 2:8; Job 9:6; 38:4-6; Ps. 75:3; 104:5
2. the roots of the mountains – Deut. 32:22; Job 28:9; Jonah 2:6

It is possible that verse 15 is alluding to YHWH's great act of deliverance in

- a. prose – Exod. 14:21-22,29
- b. poetry – Exod. 15:8; Ps. 106:9

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:16-19

**¹⁶He sent from on high, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.**

**¹⁷He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.**

**¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my stay.**

**¹⁹He brought me forth also into a broad place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in me.**

18:16-19 This strophe describes YHWH's deliverance of the psalmist. Also note the "distress" of verse 6 is now clarified as "those who hate me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity" (cf. Ps. 59:16-17)!

1. He sent from on high, He took me, cf. Ps. 144:7
2. He drew me out of many waters, cf. Ps. 32:6
3. He delivered me from my strong enemy
4. He delivered me from those who hate me
5. He brought me forth into a broad place, an idiom for freedom, cf. Ps. 4:1; 31:8; 118:5
6. He secured me, because He delighted in me, cf. II Sam. 22:20; Ps. 37:23; 41:11; 147:11

18:16 “He drew me out of many waters” This root, מַשַׁב (BDB 602, KB 642) is found only (1) here [and the parallel in II Sam. 22:17] and (2) in the account of Moses’ rescue in Exod. 2:10. It became the popular etymology of the name “Moses.”

The “many waters” can be understood in two ways.

1. a contextual metaphor of trouble/problems/attacks (cf. Ps. 32:6; 46:1-3; 69:1-2; 124:1-5; 144:5-8; Isa. 43:2)
2. an allusion to the Genesis account of YHWH defeating the waters of chaos (cf. Ps. 74:13-14; 89:9-10; 104:6-7; Isa. 51:9-10, see the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 578, and my note at Gen. 1:2, “the deep” at www.freebiblecommentary.org in Genesis 1-11)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:20-24

²⁰The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness;

According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.

²¹For I have kept the ways of the LORD,

And have not wickedly departed from my God.

²²For all His ordinances were before me,

And I did not put away His statutes from me.

²³I was also blameless with Him,

And I kept myself from my iniquity.

²⁴Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,

According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.

18:20-24 Notice the *inclusio* of v. 20 compared to v. 24. This strophe should not be understood as the psalmist claiming sinlessness or perfection. Theologically he is asserting his “blamelessness” (see Special Topic below).

Notice the parallelism of each pair.

1. according to my righteousness
2. according to the cleanness of my hands
3. I have kept the ways of the LORD
4. I have not wickedly departed from my God
5. all His ordinances were before me (for #5 and #6 see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2)
6. I did not put away His statutes from me
7. I was blameless with Him
8. I kept myself from my iniquity

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

A. Opening Statements

1. This concept theologically describes mankind’s original state (i.e., Genesis 1, the Garden of Eden).
2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e., Genesis 3).
3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27).
4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
 - a. godly leaders (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)

- b. sacrificial system (i.e., Leviticus 1-7)
 - c. godly examples (i.e., Noah, Job)
 - 5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:2-3)
 - a. as full revelation of Himself
 - b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
 - 6. Christians are made blameless
 - a. legally through Christ's imputed righteousness (cf. Romans 4-6)
 - b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
 - c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; I Pet. 1:15), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve.
 - 7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden of Eden. Heaven is the New Jerusalem coming down out of God's presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes.
 - a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
 - b. in a garden setting (Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22)
 - c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)
- B. Old Testament
- 1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
 - 2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99) are:
 - a. *shalom* (BDB1022)
 - b. *thamam* (BDB1070)
 - c. *calah* (BDB478)
 - 3. The Septuagint (i.e., the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
 - 4. The key concept is connected to the sacrificial system.
 - a. *amōmos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6; Num. 6:14)
 - b. *amiantos* and *aspilus* also have cultic connotations
- C. New Testament
- 1. the legal concept
 - a. the Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *amōmos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 1:19)
 - b. the Greek legal connotation (cf. I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)
 - 2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*amōmos*, cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19)
 - 3. Christ's followers must emulate Him (*amōmos*, cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; II Pet. 3:14; Jude v. 24; Rev. 14:5)
 - 4. This concept is also used of church leaders
 - a. *anegklētos*, "without accusation" (cf. I Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)

- b. *anepileptos*, “above criticism” or “no handle for reproach” (cf. I Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)
- 5. The concept of “undefiled” (*amiantos*) is used of
 - a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)
 - b. the Christian’s inheritance (cf. I Pet. 1:4)
- 6. The concept of “wholeness” or “soundness” (*holoklēria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; I Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)
- 7. The concept of “without fault,” guiltless innocence is conveyed by *amemptos* (cf. Luke 1:6; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; I Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23)
- 8. The concept of “not subject to blame” is conveyed by *amōmētos* (cf. II Pet. 3:14)
- 9. The concept of “spotless,” “unblemished” is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14)
- D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided our need through Christ and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically declared “right,” “just,” “blameless” by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (cf. I John 1:7). “Walk worthy of the calling” (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:13-16). God’s holiness, not only legally, but existentially!

18:20 “He has recompensed me” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is repeated at the close of the strophe (cf. v. 24). There are consequences for unbelief but, thank God, there are consequences for a faithful follower! These are spelled out in the next strophe (vv. 25-29).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:25-29

- ²⁵**With the kind You show Yourself kind;**
With the blameless You show Yourself blameless;
- ²⁶**With the pure You show Yourself pure,**
And with the crooked You show Yourself astute.
- ²⁷**For You save an afflicted people,**
But haughty eyes You abase.
- ²⁸**For You light my lamp;**
The LORD my God illumines my darkness.
- ²⁹**For by You I can run upon a troop;**
And by my God I can leap over a wall.

18:25-29 These are the wonderful divine consequences which follow a faithful believer.

- 1. “With the kind (BDB 339), You show Yourself kind” (BDB 338, KB 336, *Hithpaal* IMPERFECT; this verse and the parallel in II Sam. 22:26 are the only places in the OT that the VERB form of this special covenant NOUN, *hesed*, occurs; see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). Notice that “with” (עִם) introduces vv. 25-26, while “for” (כִּי) introduces vv. 27-29.

2. “With the blameless (BDB 1071, cf. v. 23) You show Yourself blameless” (BDB 1070, KB 1752, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT).
3. “With the pure (BDB 140, KB 162, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Isa. 52:11) You show Yourself pure” (BDB 140, KB 162, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). Notice the antithetical parallelism of vv. 26 and 27.
4. “With the crooked (BDB 786 I) You showed Yourself twisted (BDB 836, KB 990, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). “Crooked” is the opposite of righteous, which denoted that which was straight, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.
5. “For You save (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) an afflicted people.” Poor or afflicted people are contrasted with wicked people.
6. “But haughty eyes (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Isa. 2:11; 5:15) You abase” (BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). Notice the antithetical parallelism of v. 27 (II Samuel 22 parallel is slightly different).

The strophe affirms the basic biblical truth that one reaps what he/she sows (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

18:28-29 The form of vv. 25-27 is altered in vv. 28-29. The psalmist makes several assertions about YHWH’s actions.

1. For You light (BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) my lamp (BDB 632, II Sam. 22:29 has “You are my Lamp.”
2. YHWH my God illumines (BDB 618, KB 667, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, synonymous parallelism for VERBS) my darkness (objects are antithetical parallelism, i.e., lamp vs. darkness).
3. For by You I can run (i.e., defeat) upon a troop (BDB 151 I, i.e., military unit). Some English translations take גָּרַד (BDB 151) in the sense of “bank” and translate a phrase which parallels “leap over a wall” (cf. REB, NIB). The LXX (i.e., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 2007) has a totally different phrase, “because in you I shall be rescued from a pirate’s nest.” The 1970 translation of the LXX has the traditional translation. The UBS Text Project gives the word “troop” an “A” rating. The parallel in II Samuel 22 also has it.
The AB thinks “troop,” which is found only here, should be “sinew,” גָּר , which would also parallel the next line (p. 114).
4. By my God I can leap over a wall. Numbers 3 and 4 are not synonymous but are two different ways to show the power of God’s empowering.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:30-36

- ³⁰As for God, His way is blameless;
The word of the LORD is tried;
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
- ³¹For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God,
- ³²The God who girds me with strength
And makes my way blameless?
- ³³He makes my feet like hinds’ feet,
And sets me upon my high places.
- ³⁴He trains my hands for battle,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
- ³⁵You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,

And Your right hand upholds me;
And Your gentleness makes me great.
³⁶**You enlarge my steps under me,**
And my feet have not slipped.

18:30-36 This strophe explains why the psalmist gives YHWH the titles of v. 2. His actions bring the titles!

1. His way is blameless (lit. “complete” or “perfect,” BDB 1071, cf. vv. 23,30,32).
2. His word/promise (BDB 57, used 19 times in Psalm 119) is tried (BDB 864, KB 1057, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLES, cf. II Samuel 22:31; Psalm 119:140; Proverbs 30:5). See videos on “The Trustworthiness of God’s Word” on www.freebiblecommentary.org, sermons from Lakeside Baptist Church, Dallas, TX.
3. He is a shield (BDB 171, cf. v. 2)
4. He is a rock (BDB 849, cf. v. 2)
5. He girds (BDB 25, KB 28, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 39) me with strength (BDB 298, synonym of BDB 305 in v. 2)
6. He makes my way blameless (BDB 1071, cf. vv. 23,30,32)
7. He makes my feet secure (BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) like hinds’ feet (i.e., sure-footed deer who can walk safely in rugged, rocky places, cf. Hab. 3:19)
8. He trains/equips/teaches me for battle, cf. Ps. 144:1
9. He has given me the shield of His salvation, cf. v. 2
10. His right hand upholds me, cf. Ps. 63:8; 119:117 (the right hand is an idiom of powerful action, see Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4)
11. His gentleness/humility (KB 855 II, cf. II Sam. 22:36; also note Pro. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4) makes me great
12. He enlarges (BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) my steps (i.e., parallels v. 19a; Ps. 4:1; 12:5; 31:8; 118:5). NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 317 has a good insight, “What is certain is that whereas spaciousness signifies salvation, narrowness symbolizes trouble and danger.”
13. He enables the psalmist’s feet to not slip (BDB 588, KB 609, *Qal* PERFECT, i.e., stayed on the path, cf. vv. 20-24; see note at Ps. 1:1 for path way)

18:30 “For who is God, but the LORD” This is an allusion to monotheism. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:7.

18:35

NASB, NKJV	“gentleness”
NRSV	“help”
JPSOA	“care”
NASB, JPSOA	
footnotes	“condescension”
REB, NAB	“stoop down”
LXX	“instruction”

The Hebrew root is “condescension” (BDB 776, הִנָּח) or “humility” (BDB 776, הִוָּנַע). BDB supports the second option (NASB), but UBS Text Project gives the first option a “B” rating (some doubt, NRSV).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:37-42

³⁷**I pursued my enemies and overtook them,**
And I did not turn back until they were consumed.

³⁸I shattered them, so that they were not able to rise;

They fell under my feet.

³⁹For You have girded me with strength for battle;

You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.

⁴⁰You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me,

And I destroyed those who hated me.

⁴¹They cried for help, but there was none to save,

Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.

⁴²Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind;

I emptied them out as the mire of the streets.

18:37-42 This strophe is the psalmist's description of how, by YHWH's help/empowerment, he defeated his enemies. Again, it is uncertain who these enemies are, but v. 41 implies they were fellow Israelites (i.e., Saul's army, Absalom, or other rebels).

1. I pursued my enemies
2. I overtook them
3. I did not turn back (but the enemies will, cf. v. 40)
4. I shattered them
 - a. they were unable to rise
 - b. they fell under my feet
5. You have girded (i.e., prepared for action) me with strength for battle
6. You have subdued (i.e., caused to bow) them
7. You have made them turn their backs
8. I destroyed those who hated me
9. I beat them fine as the dust
10. I emptied them out as the mire of the streets (cf. II Sam. 22:43; Micah 7:10)

Notice some describe David's actions and some YHWH's enabling actions.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:43-45

⁴³You have delivered me from the contentions of the people;

You have placed me as head of the nations;

A people whom I have not known serve me.

⁴⁴As soon as they hear, they obey me;

Foreigners submit to me.

⁴⁵Foreigners fade away,

And come trembling out of their fortresses.

18:43-45 This strophe deals with the King of Israel's exalted place in YHWH's plans for the nations. Israel ("the people" of v. 43a) was meant to inform the nations and draw them to faith in YHWH (see Special Topic at Intro. to Psalm 2). But notice that Israel was "contentious" (cf. Ps. 35:1).

Notice the different phrases that refer to non-Israelites (i.e., Gentiles).

1. the King of Israel (cf. v, 50) was made the head of the nations
2. the nations are a people who the King had not known but now they serve (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal IMPERFECT*) him
3. as soon as these nations hear the King they

- a. obey (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Niphal* IMPERFECT)
- b. submit (lit. “lying” or “deceive,” but used in the sense of “cringe”; possibly “leanness” or their reduced number and influence. The Hebrew VERB has both senses) – BDB 471, KB 469, *Piel* IMPERFECT
- c. fade away – BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* IMPERFECT
- d. come trembling – BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERFECT; only here in the OT out of their fortresses – (possibly “fatness,” BDB 689, or KB 604, “prison,” cf. Micah 7:17)

Notice all the IMPERFECTS (nine) which denote ongoing action (i.e., continual defeat).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:46-50

⁴⁶**The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;
And exalted be the God of my salvation,**
⁴⁷**The God who executes vengeance for me,
And subdues peoples under me.**
⁴⁸**He delivers me from my enemies;
Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me;
You rescue me from the violent man.**
⁴⁹**Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD,
And I will sing praises to Your name.**
⁵⁰**He gives great deliverance to His king,
And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forever.**

18:46-50 This strophe is the psalmist’s thanksgiving to YHWH for His character and actions!

Notice the titles and characterizations of YHWH.

1. lives – this is the ADJECTIVE (BDB 311) which comes from the VERB “to be” (BDB 217), which is the meaning of YHWH (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1). He is the ever-living, only-living One! The phrase “as YHWH lives” is usually an introduction to an oath, but here it introduces a doxology.
2. my rock – denotes power and stability (cf. vv. 2,31)
3. the God (אלהים) of my salvation
4. His acts on the King’s behalf
 - a. executes vengeance (BDB 668)
 - b. subdues peoples
 - c. delivers (cf. v. 50)
 - d. lifts him above his enemies
 - e. rescues him from the violent man

Notice in light of this what the King of Israel will do.

1. give thanks among the nations
2. sing praises to His Name

The King does this because of

1. YHWH’s deliverance
2. YHWH’s lovingkindness to the King and his descendants forever (cf. II Samuel 7)

18:49 This verse (or II Sam. 22:50) is used by Paul in Romans 15:9 to show that YHWH’s plan of redemption from the very beginning included the Gentiles (note Gen. 1:26-27; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).

Paul also used Deut. 32:43; Ps. 117:1 and Isa. 11:10. There has always been an eternal redemptive plan for all humans (see Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at Intro. to Psalm 2).

18:50 “His anointed” See Special Topic at Psalm 2:2.

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Psalm 5:7.

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the titles of God in verse 2.
2. God is described as what in verses 7-15?
3. How would you entitle verses 16-19?
4. Does verse 20 teach a “works righteousness”?
5. Where does the title of “rock” as used of God come from? (vv. 2,31,46 and Deut. 32:4,31)
6. What do verses 43-45 imply?

PSALM 19

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Works and Word of God	The Perfect Revelation of the LORD	Hymn to God as Creator of Nature and Giver of the Law	God's Glory in Creation	Yahweh, Son of Saving Justice
<u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.				
19:1-6	19:1-4b	19:1-4b	19:1-6	19:1-2 19:3-5
	19:4c-6	19:4c-6	The Law of the LORD	0.79583333333
19:7-14	19:7-11	19:7-10	19:7-11	0.79652777778 0.79722222222 0.79791666667
		19:11-13		19:11-12
	19:12-13		19:12-13	0.80069444444
	0.80138888889	0.80138888889	0.80138888889	0.80138888889

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is about how humans know God. They cannot discover Him. He must reveal Himself and He has in two ways.
- B. God’s revelation must be personally received and implemented! It is not primarily a creed but a personal relationship with God.
- C. This Psalm has been a great blessing to my life in two ways.
 - 1. it shows the trustworthiness and preciousness of Scripture (i.e., vv. 7-10)
 - 2. it gives a hope and peace amidst the daily struggle with sin (i.e., vv. 11-14)The prayer of verse 14 is one I pray often!
- D. Brief Outline
 - 1. General revelation (God reveals Himself in nature, vv. 1-6, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; also note Rom. 2:14-15)
 - 2. Special revelation (God reveals Himself by what He does, cf. parallel of line 2), which is recorded in the Bible, yet supremely in His Son, vv. 7-11, cf. John 1:1-14; 14:6,9; II Cor. 5:17-21 (see Biblical Interpretation Seminar online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, which includes information about general hermeneutical procedures and special procedures for different genres)
 - 3. Prayer of surrender, vv. 12-14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-6

**¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

**²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.**

**³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.**

**⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,**

**⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.**

**⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

19:1 “The heavens are telling of the glory of God” This is known as “natural revelation.” Romans 1:19-20 expresses the same truth that everyone can know something about God from the physical creation. Also notice Rom. 2:14-15 which asserts an inner moral witness in humans.

▣ **“heavens”** Note Ps. 8:1; 50:6 and how they relate to the theology of Rom. 1:19-20. See Special Topic at Psalm 2:4.

▣ “glory” See BDB 458, #2, C, (2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*DOXA*)

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*, BDB 468) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 12:45; 14:8-11; Col.1:15; Heb. 1:3). The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-21). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

▣

NASB	“expanses”
NKJV, NRSV, LXX	“firmament”
NRSV footnote	“dome”
NJB, REB	“the vault of heaven”
JPSOA	“sky”

The term (BDB 956) is used in Gen. 1:6,7 (thrice),8,14,15,17. It denotes the Hebrew concept of the atmosphere as a solid dome or stretched skin (i.e., tent, cf. Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:22). The windows of heaven must be opened to allow the rain to fall.

Notice that “heavens” in line 1 is parallel to “expanses” in line 2.

▣ **“the work of His hands”** This phrase is asserting the personal involvement of YHWH in creation (cf. Isa. 48:13; 64:8). It specifically reflects His personal creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7 (i.e., “formed,” not spoken into existence).

19:2-3 “day to day” Notice the personification of both the “day” and “night.” The point is that creation continuously, though silently (cf. v. 3), is giving the revelation/message about God (i.e., a good modern proponent of this concept is the “Intelligent Design” movement).

19:2 “pour forth” This VERB (BDB 615, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) has the basic meaning of a “bubbling spring” (cf. Pro. 18:4). It came to be used metaphorically of speaking

1. positively – Ps. 19:2; 119:171; 145:7; Pro. 1:23
2. negatively – Ps. 59:7; 94:4; Pro. 15:28

▣ **“night to night reveals knowledge”** Mankind has always looked in awe and sometimes idolatry at the starry heavens (cf. II Kgs. 23:5; Ps. 8:1,3).

19:3 “There is no speech” This refers to nature’s silent, but powerful, witness.

19:4

NASB, NKJV	“line”
NRSV, JPSOA	“voice”
TEV, NJB,	
REB	“message”
LXX NASB margin	“sound”
NEB	“music”
Peshitta	“words”

The MT has מוֹק (BDB 876 II, KB 1081 from ויק), which denotes a “boundary line,” “musical melody” (cf. NEB). The UBS Text Project gives it an “A” rating. However, the LXX and Jerome have לויקם (BDB 876, KB 1083 from לויק) which means “speech,” “word,” “cry,” which seems to fit the context best (same root in v. 3, i.e., ‘voice’). The early church used (i.e., quoted from) the LXX.

▣ **“through all the earth. . .to the ends of the world”** These first two lines of v. 4 are synonymous parallelism. The theological thrust is the universal availability of God’s revelation to humans (cf. Isa. 42:10; 49:6; 62:11). All are responsible for their knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18-3:18).

Natural revelation (i.e., through the physical creation and an inner moral witness) results in a spiritual responsibility on the part of all humans (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:18). Once a person is saved it then becomes a way of wonder, praise, and worship of the God of creation (cf. Psalm 8).

19:4c-6 “the sun” This imagery using the sun is not a scientific description or mythological account but typical OT language using popular descriptive idioms for a natural phenomenon. Notice the imagery.

1. the sun has a tent (i.e., abode), v. 4c
2. the sun is a bridegroom, v. 5a
3. the sun runs a set course, v. 5b (i.e., described in v. 6)

As the sun lights all the earth, so too, the revelation of God’s character, power, beauty, and design is universal (cf. v. 4a,b). Every human knows something about God. The only other place that “natural revelation” is used theologically to denote human responsibility is Rom. 1:18-3:18.

Paul also specifically used this verse in Rom. 10:18 in a context that denotes the need of the world hearing/receiving the message of God in Christ (i.e., the gospel). The rabbis of Paul’s day often put several quotes together to make a point. Paul was trained in the procedure.

The psalmist possibly picked the sun as a servant of YHWH to critique the sun worship of the ANE. This Psalm, like Genesis 1, shows YHWH as creator and controller of the heavenly bodies (i.e., sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, etc.). They are not gods or angels that control, or even affect, the lives of humans!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:7-14

- ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
- ⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- ⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
- ¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.

¹²**Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.**

¹³**Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*;**

Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,

And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart**

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

19:7 “the LORD” This is the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is from the Hebrew VERB “to be,” cf. Exod. 3:14. The rabbis say it refers to God in His special covenant relationship to Israel. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“perfect”** See Special Topic: Blameless at Ps. 18:20-24.

19:7-9 “law. . .testimony. . .precepts. . .commandment. . .fear. . .judgments” These are synonyms for God’s written revelation. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:2.

▣ **“perfect. . .sure. . .right. . .pure. . .clean. . .true”** These are characteristics of God’s written revelation. The Bible is the only clear, self-revelation of God. This is a crucial faith assertion. It is normally called “inspiration” (see Special Topic below). If you are interested in my evidence for this faith presupposition see “The Trustworthiness of the NT” online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, “Video Sermons,” Lakeside, Dallas.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION

The “once-for-all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity (cf. II Pet. 2:21). This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT.

This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”

1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)

The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately and pleasingly to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

19:7-11 “restoring. . .making. . .rejoicing. . .enlightening. . .enduring. . .righteous. . .more desirable. . .sweeter. . .warned. . .keeping” This is what the written revelation does for us. Oh, the value of Scripture for fallen humanity!

Notice the threefold parallels.

	Titles for YHWH's Revelation	Description of YHWH's Revelation	Purpose of YHWH's Revelation or Description of It
v. 7a	the law of the LORD	perfect/blameless	restoring the soul
v. 7b	the testimony of the LORD	sure	making wise the simple (cf. Ps. 119:98-100)
v. 8a	the precepts of the LORD	right	rejoicing the heart (cf. Ps. 119:14)
v. 8b	the commandment of the LORD	pure	enlightening the eyes (cf. Ps. 36:9; 119:130)
v. 9a	the fear of the LORD	clean	enduring forever
v. 9b	the judgments of the LORD	true	righteous altogether (cf. Deut. 32:4; Ps. 119:138)
v. 10a	they	more desirable	gold, fine gold (cf. Ps. 119:72, 127)
v. 10b	they	sweeter	honey, honey comb (cf. Ps. 119:103)
v. 11a		keeping them	great reward
v. 11b		Your servant	warned

What powerful repetition and parallelism! God's revelation is redemptive, informative, prescriptive, and a real blessing! Oh, thank God for revelation!

19:8-9 “righteous” The Hebrew root originally meant “a measuring reed.” It speaks of a standard for judgment. God Himself is that standard. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.

19:9 “fear” This FEMININE NOUN (BDB 432, KB 433) means “revere” or “with awe and respect.” The concept is used often in Wisdom Literature (cf. Job 4:6; 6:14; 22:4; 28:28; Ps. 5:7; 34:11; 90:11; 111:10; 119:38; Pro. 1:7; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17). The recurrent message is that awe/respect/fear are the beginning of wisdom! Without God there is no truth, just fallen human opinions and traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13).

▣ **“enduring forever”** This same truth is expressed by Jesus in Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark. 13:31; Luke 21:33.

19:10 “they are more desirable than gold. . .honey” Does this describe your attitude toward God's revelation? Is your Bible your most precious property?

19:11 “the servant is warned” God has given us a guideline for a life of peace and joy, but it must be lived out! There is a divine path (see note at Ps. 1:1) and we must stay on it (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).

19:12-13 These verses are a recognition and prayer that amidst our current fallen ignorance and folly God will deal effectively with our fallen nature.

1. “Who can discern his errors?” (cf. Ps. 40:12). Only God knows the heart. He must judge (cf. Ps. 139:23-24; I Cor. 4:4-5; Heb. 4:12-13).
2. “Acquit me of hidden faults.” This is an IMPERATIVE of prayer (BDB 667, KB 720, *Piel* IMPERATIVE). Notice it is “hidden faults,” not open-eyed rebellion (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14).
3. “Keep back from presumptuous sins.” This is another IMPERATIVE of prayer (BDB 362, KB 359,

Qal IMPERATIVE). This is open-eyed rebellion.

The ADJECTIVE “presumptuous” (BDB 267) is used several times in Psalm 119 (cf. vv. 21, 51,69,78,85,122) and translated “arrogant,” which denotes an attitude of rebellion. In this context it refers to known sins.

4. “Let them not rule over me.” This VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT but is used in a JUSSIVE sense. This is another point of prayer. Sin is a slave-master (cf. Rom. 5:21; 6:9,14,17,23).

The last two lines of v. 13 state the requested results of the psalmist’s prayer.

1. I shall be blameless
2. I shall be acquitted of great transgression

The psalmist had great confidence in YHWH’s desire and ability to forgive and forget sin/sins (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). We only learn of the mechanism of this forgiveness in the NT record and interpretation of the life, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus the Christ (i.e., the gospel). As the Psalm extols the wonder and greatness of God’s written revelation, only the NT reveals the splendor of God’s incarnate revelation (i.e., the Living Word)! Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:2-3).

19:14 In light of the power of God’s revelation and His marvelous forgiveness, the psalmist continues his prayer.

1. Let the words of my mouth (one VERB, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, controls #1,2,3)
2. Let the meditations of my heart
3. “Acceptable” (BDB 953) is
 - a. a common sacrificial term in Leviticus
 - b. a very common word in Wisdom Literature

NIV translates it as

- 1) pleased/pleasing/pleasure
- 2) acceptable/accepted
- 3) favor/favored
- 4) fitting
- 5) delight

Once we know Him and are changed by Him, we want to live in a way that pleases Him. A way that brings others to Him. True forgiveness must issue in a changed and changing life of godliness (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eps. 1:4; 4:13; I Thess. 4:3; 5:23; II Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 1:15)! The goal of biblical faith is not heaven when we die but Christlikeness now!

▣ Several descriptive titles close this Psalm as they started Psalm 18 (i.e., v. 2).

1. YHWH (i.e., ever-living, ever-present, only God)
2. Rock
3. Redeemer (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, see Special Topic below)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga'al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf.

Leviticus 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:14; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes "the redeemer" (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).

2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means "to deliver" or "to rescue"
 - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
 - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)
- B. The theological concept involves several related items.
 1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
 2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
 - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
 3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *ga'al* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*, BDB 145).
 4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
 - a. Father
 - b. Husband
 - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.
 1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
 2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law, f. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
 3. *Luō*, "to set free"
 - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
 - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)

- c. *Lutrōsis*, “redemption,” “deliverance,” or “liberation”
 - (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus’ better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
 - 4. *Apolytrōsis*
 - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
 - (1) Luke 21:28
 - (2) Romans 8:23
 - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
 - (4) Hebrews 9:15
 - b. redemption in Christ’s death
 - (1) Romans 3:24
 - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - (3) Ephesians 1:7
 - (4) Colossians 1:14
 - 5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links “release” to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT.
- 1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
 - 2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
 - 3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
 - 4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
 - 5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
 - 6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. I John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of I Cor. 15:12-19 with I Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is “general revelation”? What can it tell you about God?
2. What is included in “special revelation”? What can it tell you about God?
3. Why are two different names for God used in this Psalm?
4. Do you find as much joy in the Law of God as this Psalm describes?
5. List characteristics of the Law.
6. What should I do about unknown sins?
7. What are “presumptuous sins”? What is so serious about them in the OT?
8. What is the meaning of verse 14 to you?

PSALM 20

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Victory Over Enemies	The Assurance of God's Saving Work	Prayer for the King's Victory in Battle	A Prayer for Victory	Prayer for the King
<u>MT Intro</u>				
For the choir director. A Psalm of David.				
20:1-3	20:1-3	20:1-3	20:1-5	20:1-2 20:3-4
20:4-5	20:4-5	20:4-5		0.33680555556 20:5b
20:6-9	0.8375 20:7-8 0.83958333333	20:6-8 0.83958333333	20:6-8 0.83958333333	0.8375 20:7-8 0.83958333333

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This may have been a liturgical prelude to battle, as Psalm 21 is a liturgy of welcoming home the victorious king and army.
- B. The offerings of v. 3 (i.e., "meal" and "fat") may have been the expected sacrificial offerings before a battle.

- C. The song/shout and the banners of v. 5 may have been the expected ways of welcoming home a victorious king.

Psalm 21 may be the song referred to in 20:5.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-3

¹May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

May the name of the God of Jacob set you *securely* on high!

²May He send you help from the sanctuary

And support you from Zion!

³May He remember all your meal offerings

And find your burnt offering acceptable!

Selah.

20:1-3,4-5 This strophe is a prayer, as is vv. 4-5, to plead with YHWH to help His covenant representative (i.e., the Davidic king, cf. I Sam. 8:7; 10:19) in battle (cf. vv. 5,7).

Notice the series of IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. NASB, NRSV, REB, NIV, JPSOA, i.e., prayer requests) in vv. 1-5.

1. May the LORD answer you – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high – BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. May He send you help from the sanctuary – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. May He support you from Zion – BDB 703, KB 761. *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. May He remember all your meal offerings – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. May He grant you your heart's desire – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 21:2; 37:4
7. May He fulfill all your counsel/purpose – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERFECT
8. May He fulfill all your petitions – same as #7

20:1 “in the day of trouble” This is a recurrent phrase (cf. Gen. 35:3; II Kgs. 19:3; Ps. 50:15; 77:3; 86:7; Pro. 24:10; 25:19; Isa. 37:3; Jer. 16:19; Obad. vv. 12,14; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). It stands for many different life problems that occur in this fallen world. The news is that God is aware of our problems (i.e., Exod. 3:7-8) and is with us in the midst of those problems. He is the answer to all human need and amazingly He is pursuing us!

The term “day” (BDB 398) has several connotations. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DAY (*YOM*)

Theories of the meaning of *yom* (day) taken and adapted from Dr. John Harris' (Dean of the School of Christian Studies and Professor of OT at East Texas Baptist University) OT Survey I Notebook:

1. The Literal Twenty-Four Hour Period Theory

This is the straightforward approach (cf. Exod. 20:9-11). Questions arising from this approach:

- a. How was there light on day one when the sun was not created until day four?
- b. How were all the animals (especially those original to other parts of the world) named in less than one day? (cf. Gen. 2:19-20)?

2. The Day-Age Theory

This theory attempts to harmonize science (particularly geology) with scripture. This theory states that the “days” were “geological ages” in length. Their length is unequal, and they approximate

the various layers described in uniformitarian geology. Scientists tend to agree with the general development of Gen. 1: vapor and a watery mass preceded the separation of land and sea prior to the appearance of life. Vegetable life came before animal life, and mankind represented the latest and most complex form of life. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. How did plants survive for “ages” without the sun?
- b. How did pollination take place in plants if insects and birds were not made until “ages” later?

3. The Alternate Age-Day Theory

The days are in fact twenty-four hour periods, but each day is separated by ages in which what was created developed. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. The same problems arise as in the Day-Age Theory.
- b. Does the text indicate “day” to be used both as twenty-four hours and as an era?

4. The Progressive Creation-Catastrophe Theory

This theory goes as follows: between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, there was an indefinite period of time in which the geological ages took place; during this period, the pre-historic creatures in the order suggested by the fossils were created; around 200,000 years ago, a supernatural disaster occurred and destroyed much of the life on this planet and made many animals extinct; then the days of Genesis 1 occurred. These days refer to a re-creation, rather than to an original creation.

5. The Eden-Only Theory

The creation account refers only to the creation and physical aspects of the Garden of Eden.

6. The Gap Theory

Based on Gen. 1:1, God created a perfect world. Based on Gen. 1:2, Lucifer (Satan) was placed in charge of the world and rebelled. God then judged Lucifer and the world by utter destruction. For millions of years, the world was left alone and the geological ages passed. Based on Gen. 1:3-2:3, in 4004 B.C.E., the six literal twenty-four hour days of re-creation occurred. Bishop Ussher (A.D. 1654) used the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to calculate and date the creation of humanity ca. 4004 B.C.E. However, genealogies do not represent complete chronological schemes.

7. The Sacred Week Theory

The writer of the book of Genesis used the concept of days and a week as a literary device to put across the divine message of the activity of God in creation. Such a structure illustrates the beauty and symmetry of God’s creative work.

8. The Cosmic Temple Inauguration

This is a recent view by John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP, 2009, which sees the six days as a “functional ontology, not a material ontology. They describe God ordering or setting up a functioning universe for mankind’s good. This fits the other ancient cosmologies. For example, the first three days would represent God providing “seasons (i.e. time),” “weather (i.e., for crops)” and food. The repeated phrase “it is good” would denote functionality.

The seventh day would describe God entering His fully functional and inhabited “cosmic temple” as its rightful own, controller and director. Genesis 1 has nothing to do with the material creation of matter but the ordering of that matter for a functioning place for God and humans to fellowship.

The “days” become a literary device to communicate the ANE’s general consensus that

1. there is no distinction between the “natural” and the “supernatural”

2. Deity is involved in every aspect of life. Israel's uniqueness was not her general world-view but the following
 - a. her monotheism
 - b. creation was for mankind, not for the gods
 - c. there is no conflict between the gods nor the gods and humanity in Israel's account.
 She did not borrow her creation account from others but shared their general world-view.

▣ **“the name of the God of Jacob”** There are two Special Topics that illuminate this phrase.

1. Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1
2. The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12

▣

NASB	“set you securely on high”
NKJV	“defend you”
NRSV, TEV, NJB, LXX	“protect you”
JPSOA	“keep you safe”
REB	“be your tower of strength”

The MT VERB (BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is from the root “to be high,” and thereby inaccessible and secure (cf. Ps. 59:1; 69:29; 91:14; 107:41). This is the same imagery of a high, defensible fortress used in Ps. 18:2!

20:2 “from the sanctuary. . .from Zion” These are parallel lines of poetry. Both refer to the temple in Jerusalem. It was not built in David's day but the tabernacle was there. Jerusalem was built on seven hills; the temple was built on Mt. Moriah (cf. I Chr. 21:18; II Chr. 3:1). Mt. Zion was the site of the Jebusite fortress captured by David (cf. II Sam. 5:7; I Chr. 11:5), as well as the site for his palace. It came to be the name used for the entire city of Jerusalem and the phrase “daughter of Zion” for the Israelite people (cf. II Kgs. 19:21).

Notice that v. 6 uses the phrase “from His holy heaven,” which is another parallel.

20:3 “Selah” See note at 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:4-5

⁴May He grant you your heart's desire
 And fulfill all your counsel!
⁵We will sing for joy over your victory,
 And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
 May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

20:4 “your heart's desire” This is “the” issue of peace and trust. A good example of an appropriate desire for a Davidic King is Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple (cf. I Kgs. 8:22-61).

20:5

NASB	“We will sing for joy”
NKJV, LXX	“we will rejoice”

NRSV, TEV,

JPSOA “we shout for joy”

NJB “with joy we can hail. . .”

REB “Let us sing aloud your praise”

This VERB (BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE) denotes a “shout” for good or bad, depending on the context. Here it is rejoicing over the military victory accomplished by YHWH (cf. Zeph. 3:14).

▣ “we will set up our banners” This follows גָּלַל (BDB 186, KB 213, *Qal* IMPERFECT [found only here in the OT] used in a COHORTATIVE sense). It would be an expected welcome procedure for the victorious king and military.

The NET Bible (p. 875) recommends an emendation to another verbal root, גָּלַל, from BDB 162 with PREPOSITION. The NET Bible suggests this fits the parallelism better and also notes Ps. 89:16, where the VERB is used in connection with “in Your name.”

▣ “petitions” This rare NOUN (BDB 982) is found only twice in the OT, here and Ps. 37:4. The VERB root (BDB 981) means “ask.” The root occurs in several names (cf. I Sam. 9:2,3,5; I Chr. 1:48,49; 4:24; 6:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:6-9

⁶Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;

He will answer him from His holy heaven

With the saving strength of His right hand.

⁷Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses,

But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.

⁸They have bowed down and fallen,

But we have risen and stood upright.

⁹Save, O LORD;

May the King answer us in the day we call.

20:6-9 The psalmist (i.e., the King, a priest, or a collective SINGULAR; v. 9 fits this last option best) affirms his confidence that YHWH will respond appropriately.

1. Now I know – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT
2. YHWH saves – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PERFECT

The VERB denotes a settled confidence (cf. Ps. 56:9; 118:6; Rom. 8:31-39). YHWH will hear and answer positively (cf. v. 6b,c). The King and the covenant people are part of a larger universal redemptive plan for all humanity (see Special Topic at Introduction to Psalm 2).

20:6 “His anointed” This is the Hebrew VERB “anoint” (BDB 603), which became a popular title for God’s Special Coming King (cf. Ps. 2:2; 18:50). See Special Topics

1. OT Titles of the Special Coming One at Ps. 2:2
2. “Messiah” at Ps. 2:2

▣ “His right hand” This is a Hebrew idiom of power, authority to act. See Special Topic: Hand at Psalm 7:3-4.

20:7 The VERB “boast” (BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is literally “cause to remember.” It denotes that which one trusts in.

1. human power (i.e., chariots, horses, soldiers, weaponry, etc.)
2. YHWH and His promises

Here are some good parallel texts – Deut. 20:1; 31:6,8; Jdgs. 7:2; I Sam. 17:45,47; II Chr. 20:17; 32:8; Ps. 33:16,17; 44:2-3,4-8; 60:11-12; 146:3-7; 147:10; Pro. 21:31; Isa. 31:3; Jer. 17:5; Zech. 4:6! What are you trusting in/boasting about?

▣ **“We will boast”** The VERB (BDB 209, KB 209, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “cause to remember” with the connotation of rejoicing or praising in some past event or blessing or person. The concept of “boasting” is significant in the Bible; note especially Jer. 9:23-24. See the use of the concept in Paul’s writings in the Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms, *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis*, are used about thirty five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

- A. no flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
- B. believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24)

Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).

- A. appropriate
 - 1. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
 - 2. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
 - 3. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul’s main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
 - 4. Paul boasts in
 - a. his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16)
 - b. his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
 - c. his not boasting in other men’s labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
 - d. his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
 - e. his churches
 - (1) Corinth (II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
 - (2) Thessalonika (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
 - (3) his confidence in God’s comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)
- B. inappropriate
 - 1. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
 - 2. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
 - a. in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
 - b. in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
 - c. in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
 - 3. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

20:8 Note the antithetical parallelism. There are consequences to our words/actions!

20:9 **“Save, O LORD”** This is an exclamatory prayer request (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 3:7; 6:4; 17:13)).

▣ **“May the King answer us in the day we call”** The grammatical form of the VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The LXX and several English translations see it referring to the prayers of the people for the King (cf. v. 6; Ps. 21:7; NRSV; TEV; NJB; REB) or “King” may refer to YHWH (cf. Targums’ *UBS Handbook*, p. 202; also note Ps. 98:6; 145:1).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List all the prayer requests that start with “may. . .” in verses 1-5.
2. What does “may He grant you your heart’s desire” mean?
3. Does verse 5 imply a military victory? Why?
4. Who is YHWH’s “anointed”?

PSALM 21

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for Deliverance	Joy In the Salvation of the LORD	Thanksgiving After the King's Victory in Battle (parallel with Psalm 20)	Praise for Victory	For a Coronation Ceremony
<u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.				
21:1-6	21:1-2 21:3-4 21:5-7	21:1-7	21:1-2 21:3-4 21:5-6 21:7-9b	21:1-2 21:3-4 21:5-7
21:7-13	21:8-12	21:8-10 21:11-12	21:9c-12	21:8-10 21:11-12
	0.88402777778	0.88402777778	0.88402777778	0.88402777778

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalm 20 and 21 may be connected. Psalm 20 is the liturgical prayer for victory in battle and Psalm 21 is a liturgical welcoming of the King and soldiers home in victory.

B. Notice the possible strophes. By comparing the strophe divisions from various English translations a person can ascertain how many main truths are expressed in a psalm.

1. NASB – 2
2. NKJV – 5
3. NRSV – 4
4. NJB – 6

Obviously it is difficult to be certain of how to identify strophes. There is often no textual marker. Modern students must

1. check the parallelism
2. check the Hebrew beat pattern
3. check related subject matter (every strophe has one major subject)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-6

**¹O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad,
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!**
**²You have given him his heart's desire,
And You have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.**
**³For You meet him with the blessings of good things;
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.**
**⁴He asked life of You,
You gave it to him,
Length of days forever and ever.**
**⁵His glory is great through Your salvation,
Splendor and majesty You place upon him.**
**⁶For You make him most blessed forever;
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.**

21:1 Note the synonymous parallelism between “in Your strength” and “in Your salvation.”

The term (BDB 447, FEMININE SINGULAR) translated salvation has several possible connotations.

1. prosperity – Job 30:15
2. deliverance/help – II Sam. 10:11; I Chr. 19:12; Ps. 22:1
3. salvation – Gen. 49:18; Ps. 3:2,8; 14:7; 35:3; 53:6; 62:2; and many more
4. victory – Exod. 15:2; Ps. 20:6; 21:1,5; 44:4; 68:20-21; 118:14,15,21

YHWH is our great hope and there is no other! In light of this, faithful followers (in this context, the King) will continue to

1. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1330, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 9:2
2. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 9:14

21:2 This verse seems to link to Ps. 20:4 and is connected to the King's prayer for military victory.

Notice the two parallel PERFECT VERBS (i.e., completed action).

1. has given – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT
2. has not withheld – BDB 586, KB 602, negated, *Qal* PERFECT



NASB, NKJV,
 NRSV “request”
 NJB “prayer”
 LXX “wish”
 NEB “ask”

The word (BDB 77, KB 92) is found only here in the OT. It seems, in context, to refer to a ritual liturgical prayer before a battle, possibly in the tabernacle/temple.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII. Some commentators feel it denotes a point in the liturgy where there is a transition to another liturgical act (i.e., praise, song, sacrifice, another liturgy read, bowing, etc.).

21:3-6 These are the actions of YHWH on behalf of the King.

1. meet him with the blessings of good things (i.e., YHWH Himself welcomes the victorious king)
2. set a crown of fine gold on his head (i.e., a reaffirmation of kingship or the liturgical transfer of the battle helmet for the royal crown)
3. gave him his prayer for life (i.e., victory in battle)
4. placed upon him
 - a. splendor (BDB 217)
 - b. majesty (BDB 214) – these are descriptions of YHWH (cf. I Chr. 16:27; Ps. 45:3; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3), but because of YHWH’s image in mankind, they share these attributes (cf. Ps. 8:5)
5. make him blessed for a long life (*’olam* must be interpreted in context, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5; a literary parallel would be “long live the king,” cf. I Sam. 10:24; I Kgs. 1:25,31,34,39; Dan. 2:4; 3:9)
6. make him joyful in Your presence

It is not just the King who is the recipient of YHWH’s actions, but through him all the covenant people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:7-13

⁷For the king trusts in the LORD,
 And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.
⁸Your hand will find out all your enemies;
 Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
⁹You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;
 The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
 And fire will devour them.
¹⁰Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,
 And their descendants from among the sons of men.
¹¹Though they intended evil against You
 And devised a plot,
 They will not succeed.
¹²For You will make them turn their back;
 You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.
¹³Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;
 We will sing and praise Your power.

21:7 “the king trusts in the LORD” This is an affirmation of the king’s faith orientation (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 4:5; 9:10; 13:5; 22:4,5,9; and many more). The king has strength, joy, and deliverance only through YHWH.

▣ **“the lovingkindness of the Most High”** The special covenant term, “lovingkindness” (*hesed*, BDB 338, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) means YHWH’s covenant loyalty. YHWH is always faithful, the King and the nation will be also, if they continue to “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120) in Him (cf. Ps. 125:1). Nehemiah 9 is a record of YHWH’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness!

For “Most High” (*Elyon*, BDB 751) see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1, B.

▣

NASB, LXX,

JPSOA “he will not be shaken”

NKJV, NRSV “he shall not be moved”

TEV “he will always be secure”

NJB “will keep him from falling”

The VERB (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) means “totter,” “shake,” or “slip.” It can be used in several senses.

1. place on the throne
2. security in life
3. godly lifestyle

To see the different senses see Ps. 10:6; 15:5; 16:8; 21:7; 30:6; 62:2,6; 112:6; Pro. 10:30; 12:3. There is stability in YHWH but not in a fallen world.

21:8-12 These verses describe what YHWH (i.e., through the king’s army) will do if the king and people stay faithful.

1. power over your enemies
2. your enemies will be destroyed
3. your enemies and their descendants will be cut off and disappear
4. your enemies will not succeed in their plans (i.e., to plan against YHWH’s king and covenant people is to plan against Him, cf. v. 11a; Ps. 2:1-3; 83:1-5)
5. your enemies will retreat in battle

Some scholars (AB) see these verses as describing YHWH’s actions in battle on behalf of His covenant king and people.

▣ **“hand”** This is a Hebrew idiom of the power to act. See Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4.

21:9 “The LORD will swallow them up” This VERB (BDB 118, KB 134, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is an idiom for complete destruction (cf. Job 2:3; 10:8; 19:3; 28:7; Lam. 2:2,5,8).

21:13 This verse concludes the Psalm with commanded praises of YHWH.

1. Be exalted – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. II San. 22:47; Ps. 18:46; 46:10; 57:5,11; 108:5
2. We will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. We will praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

▣ **“Your strength”** This mantra begins the Psalm (cf. v. 1) and closes (cf. v. 13) the Psalm. God is the chief character of the Bible. It is His book; it is about Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Psalm 20 and 21 related?
2. Does verse 4 imply eternal life?
3. List the military imagery in verses 7-13.

PSALM 22

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Cry of Anguish and A Song of Praise	The Suffering, Praise, and Posterity of the Messiah	Prayer for Deliverance from Mortal Illness (A Lament)	A Cry of Anguish and A Song of Praise	The Suffering and Hopes of the Upright
<p><u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; upon aijeleth hashshahar. A Psalm of David.</p>				
22:1-5	22:1-2	22:1-2	22:1-5	22:1-2
	22:3-5	22:3-5		22:3-5
22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8
22:9-10	22:9-11	22:9-11	22:9-11	22:9-11
22:11-18				
	22:12-13	22:12-13	22:12-13	22:12-13
	22:14-15	22:14-15	22:14-15	22:14-15
	22:16-18	22:16-18	22:16-18	22:16-18
22:19-21	22:19-21b	22:19-21a	22:19-21	22:19-21
	22:21c	22:21b-24		
22:22-24	22:22-24		22:22-24	22:22-23
				0.933333333333
22:25-31	22:25-26	22:25-26	22:25-26	22:25-26
	22:27-28	22:27-28	22:27-28	22:27-31
	0.93680555556	22:29-31	22:29-31	
	22:30-31			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Hermeneutical practice demands that modern interpreters take seriously the original author's intent as the beginning point in establishing a proper understanding of the meaning of any passage. This proves to be difficult in this psalm.
 1. uncertainty of the inspiration of the MT introductions (i.e., not present in Dead Sea Scrolls)
 2. the details do not fit the life of King David or any other OT person
 3. the striking similarity to the experiences of Jesus on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34)
- B. Therefore, how should modern interpreters classify this psalm?
 1. typology (i.e., an event in the OT parallels an event in Jesus' life)
 2. predictive prophecy
 3. multiple fulfillment prophecy
 4. historical account (in poetry) of the experience of an OT person
- C. There are several unique elements that cannot be reconciled with an OT psalmist's historical setting.
 1. crucifixion (i.e., "pierced," see note)
 2. clothes gambled for by lot
 3. rare assertion of the inclusion of the nations, v. 27
 4. possible allusion to
 - a. eternal life, v. 26c
 - b. affect on the departed, v. 29
 - c. creation of a "seed" of faithful followers for generations to come
 5. notice there is no call for vengeance or attack on the enemies
- D. I will approach the psalm, as others, from a historical, grammatical, lexical orientation, but with an eye toward the death of Christ. I can do nothing less!
- E. This psalm is quoted or alluded to in the NT in connection to Jesus' crucifixion. The NT is the proper lens to view the OT, not vice-verse! The NT (i.e., Jesus) is the ultimate revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).
 1. v. 1 – Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
 2. v. 7 – Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29
 3. v. 8 – Matt. 27:43
 4. v. 16 – Matt. 27:35; John 20:25
 5. v. 18 – Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24
 6. v. 22 – Heb. 2:12
 7. possibly v. 15 – in John 19:28

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-5

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

Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

²O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;

And by night, but I have no rest.

³Yet You are holy,

O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

⁴In You our fathers trusted;

They trusted and You delivered them.

⁵To You they cried out and were delivered;

In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

22:1 There are repeated VOCATIVE type statements.

1. My God, my God, v. 1 (the doubling is for intensity)
2. O my God, v. 2 (*Eloh*, BDB 43)
3. O LORD, v. 19a (YHWH, BDB 217)
4. O You my help, v. 19b

The psalmist is calling on God in direct address with intensity and passion. They know each other!

Just a note about Jesus quoting the first part of this psalm from the cross, by that He meant (or an inspired gospel writer) for future readers to read the whole psalm. Quoting the first line was a way to denote a context on a Scripture scroll.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “forsaken”

TEV, JPSOA “abandoned”

This VERB (BDB 736 I, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT) means to leave or reject by abandoning. The PERFECT denotes the idea of a settled rejection. In several places the OT uses the term of YHWH rejecting His covenant people and promises (cf. Ps. 119:8; Isa. 54:7; Jer. 7:12; Ezek. 8:12), but thank God for Gen. 28:15 and the second line of Isa. 54:7.

Notice the very personal aspect of this rejection or abandonment (i.e., “me,” cf. Matt. 27:46). The psalmist felt alone and betrayed by YHWH. He did not understand why. It was not because of any perceived sin (i.e., omission or commission).

▣ The second line has no VERBAL. NKJV, NRSV, REB, JPSOA all add “Why are you. . .,” making it a question. The psalmist is “groaning” (BDB 980, cf. Job 3:24; Ps. 32:3). The Hebrew word can refer to the roar of a lion (cf. Job 4:10), but here to a human groan of psychological and physical pain and confusion, which fits this context best. The psalmist could not understand why the covenant God had rejected a faithful covenant person (cf. v. 2).

This terrible sense of alienation, loneliness, and spiritual confession is the result of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3). Mankind, made in YHWH’s image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8), has been damaged. The estrangement is terrible. In this case the sense of YHWH’s silence is accentuated because the psalmist knew Him. The psalmist could not understand the silence from God and the vicious attack of others! But there was a purpose (i.e., the gospel, cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)!

22:2 The psalmist’s persistent prayer goes unheard by God or at least He does not apparently respond (cf. Ps. 42:3; 88:1-2).

The second line of v. 2 is difficult to translate. Literally “there is no silence for me.” This could mean

1. he prays all night (NKJV, REB)

2. God remains silent
3. he finds no rest (LXX, TEV, JPSOA)

If this reflects Jesus' future experience, then the last night in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest fits best (cf. Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42).

22:3-5 The psalmist describes God as

1. holy (cf. Ps. 99:9)
2. enthroned upon the praises of Israel (i.e., YHWH dwells between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies)
3. trusted in by the Patriarchs
 - a. they prayed, He delivered
 - b. they trusted and were not disappointed (i.e., there is historical precedent to trust in YHWH)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:6-8

⁶**But I am a worm and not a man,
A reproach of men and despised by the people.**
⁷**All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, *saying*,**
⁸**“Commit *yourself* to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”**

22:6-8 In spite of vv. 3-5 and God's faithful actions in the past to those who trusted in Him, the psalmist did not feel helped.

1. he felt like a worm, v. 6 (cf. Job 25:6; Isa. 41:14)
2. he was reproached and despised by people, v. 6b
3. they sneered at him, v. 7 (see Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29)
4. they mocked his faith and prayers, v. 8
 - a. commit (lit. “roll,” cf. Ps. 37:5; Pro. 16:3) – BDB 164, KB 193, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. Matt. 27:43)
 - b. let Him deliver him – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Matt. 27:43)
 - c. let Him rescue him – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:9-10

⁹**Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust *when* upon my mother's breasts.**
¹⁰**Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother's womb.**

22:9-10 The imagery of these verses is the predestined purpose of the righteous suffering servant.

1. sometimes an individual (used of Messiah in Isa. 42:1 and of His death in Isa. 52:13-53:12)
2. sometimes the collective people of YHWH (cf. Isa. 41:8-9; 42:18-19; 46:3; 49:1)

This is OT covenant language. It expresses the redemptive purposes of God for Israel (see Special Topic at Intro. to Psalm 2). The psalmist believed he had a purpose in God's plan and could not understand God's seeming abandonment (cf. II Cor. 5:21).

22:10 This verse is reflecting the concept of covenant acceptance by birth (i.e., circumcision). Israelites were born into the covenant people, however, true covenant faith and obedience were the confirming evidence of the reality of their faith. So many Israelites were not truly covenant people (i.e., disobedience to the covenant stipulations, idolatry)!

22:9

NASB, REB “brought me forth”

NKJV “took me out”

NRSV “took me”

NJB, JPSOA “drew me”

LXX “cast from”

This PARTICIPLE (BDB 161, KB 189) occurs only here in the OT. Context gives us a general sense but the exact connotation must remain uncertain. However, the general meaning of the verse is clear.

YHWH is involved in a person’s life even before birth (cf. Job 31:11; Ps. 139:13; Eccl. 11:5; Jer. 1:5). Life begins with God! Humans are created by Him and for Him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:11-18

¹¹**Be not far from me, for trouble is near;
For there is none to help.**

¹²**Many bulls have surrounded me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled me.**

¹³**They open wide their mouth at me,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.**

¹⁴**I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.**

¹⁵**My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You lay me in the dust of death.**

¹⁶**For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.**

¹⁷**I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;**

¹⁸**They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.**

22:11-18 This describes in poetic imagery the suffering of the psalmist. Many of the poetic details and parallelism turned out to be very literal of Jesus’ rejection and crucifixion.

22:11 “Be not far from me” This VERB (BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. v. 19; Ps. 71:12) is used in an interpersonal sense, not a distance sense. The psalmist felt alone (“there is

none to help,” cf. Isa. 63:5) to face his enemies (i.e., bulls, lions, dogs, wild oxen). Notice the contrast—when trouble is near the psalmist wants YHWH near also!

22:12-13,16-18 His enemies are described.

1. bulls have surrounded him, v. 12
2. lions have attacked him, v. 13 (i.e., opened wide their mouths, which is an idiom for a vicious attack)
3. dogs have surrounded him, v. 16
4. they stare at him
5. they pierced his hands and feet (cf. John 20:25; see note below)
6. they/I can count all my bones (i.e., [1] in the OT this may refer to the suffering man being just skin and bones, [2] he is dead, having been devoured by animals and only his bones are left or [3] in the NT this may refer to the detail that the two thieves’ legs were broken to bring about their rapid death on crosses but Jesus, by this time, had already died)
7. they divided his clothes by casting lots (cf. Matt. 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24)

22:14-15 This is highly figurative language. It is hard to pin down the exact allusion but the accumulative effect is a completely discouraged person in light of

1. YHWH’s apparent absence even though the psalmist cries/groans day and night
2. the presence of violent enemies on every side
3. the possibility that the imagery is alluding to symptoms of sickness (cf. Isa. 52:14) or even the early process of bodily decay before death (i.e., lit. “bones scattered about,” BDB 825, KB 962)

A striking, painful, surprising feeling from a faithful covenant follower!

22:15

NASB, NKJV,

RSV, LXX “strength”

NRSV, NJB,

REB “mouth”

TEV

“throat”

JPSOA

“vigor”

The UBS Text Project gives the MT’s “my strength” (יָחַז) an “A” rating (high probability). The NRSV, NJB, REB, and TEV reverse the consonants to produce “my palate” (יָחַז, KB 313, cf. Job 12:11; 20:13; Ps. 119:103; 137:6; Lam. 4:4; Ezek. 3:26).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “jaws”

REB

“gums”

TEV

“the roof of my mouth”

NJB

“jaw”

JPSOA

“palate”

LXX

“throat”

This Hebrew word (BDB 544 II, KB 594) occurs only here in the OT. Therefore context, parallelism, and related roots must provide interpreters a possible meaning. But please note that just because we do not know the exact meaning of this word, still the general sense of the verse is obvious.

22:15 “You lay me in the dust of death” The “you” here must refer to YHWH. YHWH (i.e., the only causality in the universe) allowed the psalmist to approach death (i.e., IMPERFECT VERB, cf. Ps. 104:29). This fits into the NT understanding of Jesus’ vicarious, substitutionary death on our behalf as YHWH’s predestined will (cf. Luke 22:28; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; I Pet. 1:20).

Jesus was incarnated for several purposes.

1. fully reveal the Father
2. fully reveal His redemptive plan (i.e., the gospel)
3. die in our place, for our sin
4. show us what humans were created to be

It is crucial in interpreting these oblique OT texts to see the full and complete revelation of the NT. The NT is the perfect fulfillment of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). The story is fully understood only in Jesus, the Messiah!

22:16

NASB, NKJV,

RSV

“they have pierced”

NRSV

“shriveled” (Akkadian root)

TEV

“tear at”

LXX

“gouged” or “dig”

NJB, NEB

“hack off”

JPSOA (cf. Isa. 38:13) “like lions (they maul, cf. v. 13)”

REB (footnote)

“bound”

NET Bible

“like a lion they pin”

This verse is not quoted directly in the NT Gospels related to Jesus’ crucifixion. Several other verses of this Psalm are. The real question is “What does the Hebrew say?”

1. The UBS Text Project gives “like a lion” (יראכ, BDB 71) a “B” rating.
2. The VERB “dig,” “bore,” or “pierce” comes from רוכ, BDB 468 II (found only here).
3. “Bound” or “tie” comes from the Greek translation of Aquila, Symmachus, the Latin translation of Jerome, and two Hebrew MSS (cf. *UBS Handbook*, p. 221). They assume the root is רכך, BDB 501, KB 497, but there are no OT examples of it.
4. See a good technical note in Gleason Archer’s *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 37.

Usually this idea of being pierced refers to a violent death by sword or spear in battle (several different roots but two prophetically significant).

1. Zech. 12:10 – BDB 201, KB 230 (cf. John 19:37; Rev. 1:7)
2. Isa. 53:5 – BDB 319, KB 320

The ambiguity (i.e., rarity, only here in the OT) of this word allows it to function in an OT sense and a NT sense. This Psalm must have had meaning in its day but obviously points beyond to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ (i.e., nails pierced His hands and feet). The full meaning of many OT texts comes to light only in Christ (i.e., typology or direct prediction). I think it was Jesus Himself who showed these texts of His suffering and resurrection to the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-43) and they told the ones in the upper room. Just then He appeared to them and showed them His hands and feet (cf. Luke 24:36-43).

22:14-15,17 These verses describe how the suffering/attacked author feels.

1. I am poured out like water
2. all my bones are out of joint (i.e., this was one result of crucifixion)
3. my heart is like wax
4. my strength (or “palate”) is dried up (this possibly relates to Jesus taking some wine just before

His last words, cf. Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36; John 19:29)

It is not certain how or if v. 17a relates to v. 14b. We are dealing with Hebrew poetic parallelism! Remember this is not prose. This is figurative language. Be careful of pushing details for theological purposes, unless it is done by an inspired NT author!

22:16 “a band of evildoers” The word “band” (BDB 417) means gathering or assembly. A different word (BDB 874) is used of the same concept in vv. 22 and 25. What a contrast between these two assemblies.

1. evil men with evil purposes gather together
2. godly men with witness and worship purposes gather together (cf. Ps. 1:5)

Which group do you want to be a part of?

22:18 In the OT this would refer to the spoils of war being divided among the victors! Notice there is no parallel OT passage. In the NT it refers to the fact that the Roman soldiers who carried out the crucifixion were allowed to divide the condemned person’s possessions among themselves as a payment for the extra duty.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:19-21

¹⁹But You, O LORD, be not far off;

O You my help, hasten to my assistance.

²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword,

My only *life* from the power of the dog.

²¹Save me from the lion’s mouth;

From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

22:19-21 Verse 19 links to verse 11. The **JUSSIVE** (see note below) is followed by three **IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST**.

1. hasten to my assistance – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1
1. deliver my soul – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. save me – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

This strophe closes “You answered me” with a *Qal* PERFECT VERB (BDB 772, KB 851) which implies that the psalmist has come to the conviction that YHWH is/will answer him (cf. Ps. 34:4; 118:5; 120:1).

Notice again how the psalmist characterizes his enemies.

1. the sword (i.e., “pierced” of possibly the bite of dogs, cf. v. 16)
2. paw of the dog (cf. v. 16)
3. the lion’s mouth (cf. v. 13; 35:17)
4. the horns of the wild oxen (symbol of power, cf. Job 39:9-10)

22:19 “be not far off” See note at verse 11.

22:20 “from the sword” It is difficult to know exactly what problems/distresses/enemies the psalmist is facing.

1. sickness
2. rebellion
3. invasion

Because of the many links to Jesus’ life, I think “sword” is figurative language (cf. Ps. 37:12-15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:22-24

- ²²I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.**
- ²³You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.**
- ²⁴For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.**

22:22-24 In a sense this strophe overlaps with vv. 25-31. Both speak of witness and praise of YHWH in a worship setting (i.e., the assembly, v. 22; the great assembly, v. 25). The difference is the scope of the help.

1. vv. 22-24 – the afflicted
2. vv. 25-31 – the world

22:22 There are two COHORTATIVE VERBS.

1. I will tell – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
2. I will praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

22:23 Notice the parallelism.

1. you who fear the LORD
2. you descendants (lit., seed) of Jacob
3. you descendants of Israel

They are to

1. praise Him – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. glorify Him – BDB 457, KB 455, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. stand in awe of Him – BDB 158, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

22:24 The reasons for the praise, glory, and awe to YHWH are

1. He has not despised (BDB 102, KB 117, *Qal* PERFECT) the afflicted
2. He has not abhorred (BDB 1055, KB 1646, *Piel* PERFECT) the afflicted
3. He has not hidden His face (BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* PERFECT) from the afflicted
4. When the afflicted cried to Him for help, He heard (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT)

The psalmist now feels YHWH has heard his cries for help and will respond (cf. vv. 21,22-24). This is a reversal of vv. 1-2,8,11,19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:25-31

- ²⁵From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.**
- ²⁶The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!**
- ²⁷All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.**

²⁸For the kingdom is the LORD's

And He rules over the nations.

²⁹All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,

All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,

Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.

³⁰Posterity will serve Him;

It will be told of the Lord to the *coming* generation.

³¹They will come and will declare His righteousness

To a people who will be born, that He has performed *it*.

22:25-26 The setting is a worship setting, probably the tabernacle/temple (i.e., “pay vows” and “eat and be satisfied”). The worshipers are characterized as “the afflicted” (BDB 776) from v. 24. They are the ones who

1. seek YHWH, v. 26 – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. praise YHWH, v. 26 – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT

22:26 “Let your heart live forever” This VERB (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE) reflects the common idiom used of the Kings of Israel/Judah. The psalmist is a king. There seems to be fluidity in vv. 28-31 between the covenant God and His kingly representative (i.e., Messiah, cf. II Sam. 7:1-17).

22:27 The universal emphasis is shocking and unmistakable.

1. all the ends of the earth (cf. Isa. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; 66:23; Jer. 16:19; Micah 5:4)
2. all the families of the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8)

Notice what the nations will do.

1. remember YHWH – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. turn to YHWH – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT (this VERB is often used of repentance)
3. worship before You/Him – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel/Hithpalel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 66:4; 86:9

22:28 The reason for the universal emphasis is given. This has always been YHWH's desire. It is the clear implication of Gen. 1:26-27 and the theological assertion of monotheism!

1. The kingdom is YHWH's (cf. Ps. 47:7-9; 67:4; Obad. v. 21; Zech. 14:9)
2. He rules over the nations (cf. Ps. 47:8; I Chr. 16:31)

22:29 This verse is difficult to translate. Literally it would be

“all those in full vigor shall eat and prostrate themselves;

all those at death's door, whose spirits flag, shall bend the knee before Him” (JPSOA)

There is obviously a contrast between the wealthy and the poor/dying. The thrust of the verse is that everyone, everywhere will worship YHWH/His Messiah. Can we go so far as to see this verse as teaching an afterlife? In light of the NT's use of this Psalm as referring to Jesus' death, maybe so (cf. Luke 23:39-43).

One wonders if v. 29b has any connection to Phil. 2:10. The NT asserts that one day every knee shall bow.

1. the lost
2. the saved

This bowing in judgment is not an act of faith for the lost, but an acknowledgment of a fair judgment.



NASB, NKJV “even he who cannot keep his soul alive”
NRSV “and I shall live for him”
NJB “those who are dead”
REB “But I shall live for his sake”

The MT is reflected in the NASB, which the UBS Text Project gives a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The LXX is reflected in the NRSV, which involves the emendation of two consonants.

MT – פנושו אל היה

LXX – פנושי ל היה

22:30-31 A new faith seed/family/descendant will come from the terrible suffering event. They will serve the Suffering One and declare His righteousness (i.e., innocence)!

22:31

NASB “He has performed *it*”
NKJV “He has done *this*”
NRSV “he has done it”
TEV “the LORD saved his people”
NJB “he has fulfilled it”
LXX, JPSOA,
REB “the LORD acted”

The VERB (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT) speaks of an accomplished task (cf. I Sam. 26:25; Dan. 8:24). In light of NT usage this refers to mankind’s redemption on Calvary (cf. Rom. 5:12-21), evidenced and verified by the empty tomb (cf. I Cor. 15:1-28)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm a prediction, a typology, or a multi-fulfillment prophecy?
2. List the possible connections between this psalm and Jesus’ death.
3. The psalmist calls his adversaries by names of several animals. List them.
4. Why is there doubt about the word “pierced” in verse 16?
5. Explain the mood shift at verse 22.
6. Why are verses 27-29 so theologically significant?

PSALM 23

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD, the Psalmist's Shepherd	The LORD the Shepherd of His People	An Expression of confidence in God's Protection (A Song of Trust)	The LORD Our Shepherd	The Good Shepherd
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
23:1-3	23:1-3	23:1-3	23:1-4	23:1-2a 23:2b-3
23:4-6	0.961111111111 23:5-6	0.961111111111 23:5-6	23:5-6	0.961111111111 0.96180555556 0.9625

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is possibly the best known passage in the Bible by the general public; the other ones being John 3:16 or "the love chapter" in I Corinthians 13.
This is the biblical worldview of a faithful follower. The focus is on YHWH and His presence, care, and provision!
- B. It uses three distinct cultural metaphors to describe the close personal aspect of biblical faith (i.e., "I," "me," "my").
 1. God as Shepherd; His people as needy sheep, vv. 1-2

2. God as Guide; His people as needy pilgrims, vv. 3-4
 3. God as Host; His people as welcomed guests, vv. 5-6
- C. This Psalm has ten IMPERFECT (ongoing action) VERBS. God is present every day, not just in crisis times. This is the OT counterpoint of Matt. 6:11.
1. I do not lack – BDB 341, KB 338, *Qal* NEGATED IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 34:9,10
 2. He makes me lie down – BDB 918, KB 1181, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 3. He leads me – BDB 624, KB 675, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 4. He restores my soul – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Polel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 19:7
 5. He guides me – BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 5:8; 31:3
 6. Even though I walk – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 7. I fear no evil – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 27:1
 8. They (i.e., rod and staff) comfort me – BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 9. You prepare a table before me – BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 10. Goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 11. I will dwell/turn – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*, cf. Ps. 27:4-6
- D. The *UBS Handbook* (p. 230) notes that this Psalm does not have synonymous parallelism. The poetic lines do not have symmetry (i.e., same length). It is a climactic progression in succinct wording. Its brevity accentuates its message and power!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-3

¹The LORD is my shepherd,
 I shall not want.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me beside quiet waters.
³He restores my soul;
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 For His name's sake.

23:1 The opening line is literally “YHWH is the one shepherding me.” The only VERBAL is the *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (BDB 944, KB 1258). The concept of YHWH as Shepherd was a royal title in the ANE (i.e., Hammurabi). In the OT it is used in the sense of

1. a description – Ps. 78:52; Ezek. 34:11-13
2. a covenant title – Ps. 80:1
3. a metaphor – Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10
4. the Messiah as Shepherd – John 10:11; I Peter 2:25

It is such powerful imagery because of

1. the close and constant presence of the shepherd with the sheep
2. the sheep's need of an ever-present caretaker and protector

▣ **“I shall not want”** This is a simple but comprehensive phrase. It cannot refer to every want or need. It denotes that which is necessary for sheep to be healthy. The worst thing God could do for most fallen humans is answer positively their selfish, worldly requests. The Shepherd of our souls will do and give that which is best for us!

23:2 This verse describes verse 1. The Shepherd knows that sheep need

1. rest
2. food
3. water

He provides these in ways that the sheep can accept (i.e., the right food, water they can drink from easily). We are not alone (cf. Psalm 139)! There is purpose in our lives, even in a fallen world. This is not meant to imply a pain-free, problem-free life experience. It does affirm that He is with us, and for us (cf. I Cor. 10:13).

23:3 “He restores my soul” This verse addresses and acknowledges the fallen human condition (cf. Isa. 53:6). We need “restoring.” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is the very VERB used of “repentance,” see Special Topic at 7:12. This same VERB is used in v. 6 of returning to the tabernacle/temple for lifelong fellowship. Faithful followers, motivated by God’s Spirit, must turn from self and sin, and to God. Biblical salvation is

1. a reversal of the fall
2. restored intimacy with God
3. turning from known sin and forgiveness for unknown sin (cf. Ps. 19:12-14)
4. purposeful turning to God (i.e., in fellowship, obedience, and worship, cf. v. 3b)

The Hebrew term “soul” is *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711, see note at Ps. 3:2) and can refer to

1. human beings – Gen. 2:7
2. animals – Gen. 1:24; 2:19



NASB, NKJV “in the paths of righteousness”

NRSV, TEV,

JPSOA, REB “in right paths”

NJB “in paths of saving justice”

In context this refers to the safe paths that lead to food and water. The word “right” or “righteousness” (BDB 841, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5) basically has an ethical, moral aspect and surely it is implied here (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10). To know God is to live in obedience to His revealed will. This implication is reenforced by the last phrase of v. 3, “for His Name’s sake” (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12). He “leads” so we man “live” for Him. We as faithful followers reveal Him! He saves us to save others. We are saved to serve!

For the phrase “for His name’s sake,” see Ps. 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11. We live to reveal His character and purposes. Often Israel did not (cf. Jer. 14:21; Ezek. 20:9,14,22; 36:22-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:4-6

**⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

**⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.**

**⁶Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

23:4

NASB, NKJV “the valley of the shadow of death”
NRSV “the darkest valley”
TEV “the deepest darkness”
NJB “a ravine as dark as death”
LXX “death’s shadow”
JPSOA, REB “a valley of deepest darkness”

This is a CONSTRUCT of “valley” (BDB 161) and “darkness,” “deep shadow” (BDB 853). Many scholars think תומלצ comes from לצ and תומ.

1. shadow, gloom, darkness – BDB 853, KB 1024
2. death, dying – BDB 560, KB 563

It is used eighteen times in the OT (ten in Job) for

1. death – Job 10:21,22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14
2. distress – Job 16:16; 24:17; Ps. 44:20
3. often in context with contrast to light – Job 3:5; 12:22; 24:17; 28:3; 34:22; Jer. 13:16; Amos 5:8

It is used figuratively of the fearful, distressing, and fatal experiences of fallen humanity in this fallen world. Live is fearful but God is with us (cf. v. 4b,c; Deut. 31:6,8; Matt. 28:20; II Cor. 4:9; Heb. 13:5).

▣ **“fear. . .comfort”** What a contrast! Faithful ones face trials with confidence because God is with them (i.e., symbolized with the Shepherd’s rod and staff, His instruments of care and protection).

Problems will come! We never face them alone! Never! He will never forsake us or leave us (cf. Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5).

23:5 Not only is God with us and for us, He will vindicate us in the very presence of those who would harm us. The culturally expected hospitality is used to demonstrate the extravagant abundance of God’s love.

1. table prepared
2. anointed head
3. overflowing love

▣ **“overflows”** This is a rare word (BDB 924, “saturated”) found only here in the OT. Psalm 66:12 has “place of abundance” (slightly different spelling). The LXX translates it as “Your cup cheers me like the best wine” or “Your cup was supremely intoxicating,” which obviously takes the idea from “saturated” as “intoxicated.”

23:6 “goodness” The VERB (BDB 373), ADJECTIVE (BDB 373 II), and NOUN (BDB 375III) all denote that which is “good,” “pleasing,” “beneficial.” They are used extensively in Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. This is what God wanted to do for His covenant people (i.e., Deut. 30:9,15).

▣

NASB “lovingkindness”
NKJV, NRSV “mercy”
TEV “love”
NJB “faithful love”
JPSOA “steadfast love”
REB “love unailing”

This is the special covenant NOUN *hesed* (BDB 338), which denoted YHWH’s faithful, undeserved covenant loyalty (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). The covenant loyalty is all the more striking in light of Israel’s disobedience (cf. Neh. 9:6-38).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, REB “follow”

TEV

“will be with me”

NJB, LXX,

JPSOA “pursue”

This VERB (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has a more aggressive sense than “follow.” It denoted active pursuit. Just think, God’s covenant love chased the Israelites. It is a

1. military word
2. a hunting word
3. a judicial word

Stop! Turn around! Look who is pursuing you, yes you!

▣ The last line in this OT context does not denote eternal life (other texts do, cf. Rev. 21:3-7; 22:1-5) but a life of covenant goodness (cf. Deut. 30:3,15,19). This was to be lived out in daily life and regular tabernacle/temple worship.

The VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) can denote

1. to sit down with (ancients)
2. to return (Hebrew)

▣ “forever” See Special Topic at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is YHWH like a shepherd?
2. How do the VERBS of verses 1-3 apply to the daily life of faithful followers?
3. Define “the valley of the shadow of death.”
4. Does this Psalm foreshadow an afterlife?
5. Why is the Psalm so meaningful to believers of all ages?

PSALM 24

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The King of Glory Enters <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	The King of Glory and His Kingdom	A Liturgy On Entering the Sanctuary	The Great King	For a Solemn Entry Into the Sanctuary
24:1-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 0.002083333 0.002777778 24:5-6
24:7-10	24:7-10	24:7-10	24:7-8 24:9-10	0.004861111 0.005555556 0.00625 24:9-10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a psalm about
 1. YHWH as creator (vv. 1-2) and warrior (v. 8)
 2. those who can approach Him to worship Him (vv. 3-6)
- B. Notice the consistent use of synonymous parallelism

- C. Notice the vocatives
1. O gates, vv. 7,9
 2. O ancient doors, vv. 7,9
 3. Jacob, v. 6 may be “O Jacob”
- D. Notice the titles and descriptive phrases
1. the God of his salvation, v. 5 (cf. Ps. 18:46; 25:5; 51:14; 79:9)
 2. the King of glory, vv. 7,8,10 (twice)
 3. YHWH strong and mighty, v. 8
 4. YHWH mighty in battle, v. 8
 5. YHWH of hosts, v. 10
- Numbers 3,4,5 have a military connotation.
- E. Notice how those allowed to approach YHWH in worship (cf. Psalm 15) at His tabernacle/temple are characterized.
1. he who has clean hands, cf. Job 17:9; 22:30
 2. he who has a pure heart, cf. Ps. 73:1
 3. he who has not lifted his soul to falsehood, cf. Ezek. 18:15
 4. he who has not sworn deceitfully
 5. those who seek Him, cf. Ps. 9:10; 24:4,8; 27:8; 34:4; 69:32
- This may have been a liturgical chant by Levites as worshipers came on a set feast day.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-6

¹The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
²For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.
³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?
⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.
⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
⁶This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face—*even Jacob.* **Selah.**

24:1-2 These verses emphasize YHWH as creator (cf. Genesis 1-2; Exod. 9:29; 19:5; Ps. 50:12; 89:11; 104), both inanimate and animate, both animals and humans (cf. Ps. 146:6; Jer. 27:5; 51:15).

In verse 2 the figurative imagery is of the earth founded as water (cf. Ps. 104:3,5; 136:6). Water (both fresh [i.e., rivers] and salty [i.e. seas]) is not said to have been created in Genesis 1. In ANE mythology water referred to a chaos monster. For more information see

1. notes on Gen. 1:2 in Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org

2. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 545-549, “Divine Warrior”. In the Bible God controls water (cf. Amos 9:6).

He, not the fertility gods, uses it for His purposes.

1. creation and judgment
2. sustain plant and animal life (i.e., annual rains)

24:1 “earth. . .world” The first word (BDB 75) is very common and has a wide semantic field, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2. The second word (BDB 385) is a poetic SYNONYM used mostly in Psalms and Isaiah.

24:2 “founded. . .established” These two VERBS (cf. Pro. 3:19)

1. BDB 413, KB 417, *Qal* PERFECT
2. BDB 465, KB 414, *Polel* IMPERFECT

are in a parallel relationship. They both assert that YHWH, the creator God, firmly founded the dry land on pillars (cf. I Sam. 2:8; Job 9:6; Ps. 75:3), which reached to the ocean floor and mountain roots (cf. Job 38:4-6; Ps. 18:7,15; Jonah 2:6).

This is not a modern scientific description but pre-scientific poetic imagery! The Bible was not written to answer or inform modern western science. It is an Ancient Near Eastern book, written in phenomenological language (i.e., as things appear to the five human senses).

24:3-6 This may be a separate strophe (see first page of English translation’s literary units). It discusses those who seek to worship the God of creation (cf. v. 6 and Contextual Insights, E).

The place to worship Him is in His tabernacle/temple in Jerusalem (v. 3). The temple is a symbol of the whole world (cf. Jewish Study Bible, p. 1308, vv. 1-2 and NASB Study Bible, p. 762, v. 2). A new book that has helped me understand Genesis 1-2 as YHWH building His temple is John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*. I hope you will look at it. It has the potential to solve, or at least reduce, the conflict over

1. the age of the earth
2. evolution
3. purpose of Genesis 1-2
4. how Genesis relates to other ANE creation accounts

In order to do this, covenant obedience (cf. Psalm 15) is required (cf. v. 4). The ones who are obedient will receive

1. a blessing from YHWH, v. 5
2. righteousness (i.e., vindication, cf. Isa. 54:17) from the God of his salvation, v. 5

Verses 4-6 answer the two questions posed in verse 3. This strophe seems to be ascension liturgy, sung by Levites as worshipers climb to the tabernacle/temple on Mt. Moriah.

24:4 “lift up” This VERB (BDB 669, KB 724) is used several times in this Psalm.

1. v. 4 – who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood (*Qal* PERFECT)
2. v. 5 – he shall receive (lit. “carry away”) blessing (*Qal* IMPERFECT)
3. vv. 7,9 – lift up your heads, O gates (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)
4. vv. 7,9 – be lifted up, O ancient doors (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)
5. how Genesis relates or does not relate to modern science

▣ **“soul”** This is the Hebrew term *nephesh* (BDB 659). See note at Ps. 3:2 and 23:3.

▣

NASB “to falsehood”
 NKJV “to an idol”
 NRSV, REB “to what is false”

TEV “worship idols”
NJB “vanities”
JPSOA “false oath”

The word (BDB 996) basically means “empty,” “vain,” or “nothingness.” It is used in several senses (see Special Topic below).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EMPTY, VAIN, FALSE, NOTHINGNESS (BDB 996)

This word basically means “empty,” “vain,” or “nothingness.”

1. swearing/using YHWH’s name in vain – Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20; Ps. 24:4; 139:20
2. of idols – Ps. 31:6; Jer. 18:15; Jonah 2:8
3. of speech – Ps. 12:2; 41:6; 144:8,11; Pro. 30:8; Isa. 59:3; Ezek. 13:8; Hos. 10:4
4. of motives – Job 15:31; Isa. 5:18; 30:28
5. of prophecy – Job 35:13,16; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 12:24; 13:6,7,9,23; 22:28
6. of worthless men – Job 11:11; Ps. 26:4
7. of human activity – Ps. 60:13; 89:48; 108:13; 127:2
8. of worthless offerings – Isa. 1:13

This is not the same term as “vanity” (BDB 210 I), used so often in Ecclesiastes. It does occur in Psalm 31:6; 39:5-6,11; 62:9; 78:33; 94:11, 144:4).

▣ If v. 4 has four characteristics of a true faithful follower, and if the second line is parallel to the third, then they both must refer to true testimony in court, instead of v. 4b referring to idolatry. The use of “righteousness” in a judicial sense (cf. v. 5b) gives credence to this. Also note NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 153, where “clean hands” are imagery of a judicial acquittal.

24:6 “seek. . .seek” These translate two different but parallel Hebrew roots.

1. BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (MT – SINGULAR, *Qere* – PLURAL), cf. Ps. 78:34
2. BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. Deut. 4:29; I Chr. 16:11; II Chr. 7:14; Ps. 27:8; 105:4; Hos. 3:5; 5:15; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3

▣ “—*even Jacob*” This could be understood in more than one way.

1. the God of Jacob (LXX)
2. seek God as Jacob sought Him
3. another name for the covenant people (like “generations”); Jacob = Israel

▣ “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and in Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:7-10

⁷Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
⁸Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.

**⁹Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift *them* up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!**

¹⁰Who is this King of glory?

**The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory.**

Selah.

24:7-10 The gates/ancient doors must refer to the gates of Jerusalem at the temple (v. 3). They are personified so as to greet the King of glory, YHWH, as He comes to His house/temple after a victory (cf. Exod. 14:14; 15:3; Deut. 1:30; 3:22, i.e., holy war). It is probable that a procession with the ark of the covenant symbolized YHWH's coming back to the temple. Notice all the commands.

1. lift up your heads – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be lifted up – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. that the King of glory may come in – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. lift up your head – same as #1
5. be lifted up – same as #2, but *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. same as #3

The *UBS Handbook* (p. 241) suggests that verse 7 is the liturgical cry of the pilgrims coming to worship. If so, then verses 8 and 10 might be a liturgical Levitical response. I think verses 1-6 comprise a Levitical liturgy spoken by the gatekeepers of the temple.

24:10 There is no VERBAL in this verse. The “to be” VERB is supplied for English readers as it was by ancient Hebrew readers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Psalm 15 and Psalm 24 related?
2. Define “falsehood” in its OT sense.
3. What does it mean to “seek Your face”?
4. To what event do verses 7-10 seem to be a liturgical mantra?

PSALM 25

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for Protection, Guidance and Pardon	A Plea for Deliverance and Forgiveness	Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Guidance and Protection	Prayer in Danger (Acrostic)
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
25:1-3	25:1-3	25:1-2	25:1-3	25:1-2a (<i>Aleph</i>) 25:2b (<i>Bet</i>) 25:3 (<i>Gimel</i>)
25:4-7	25:4-5	25:4-5	25:4-5	25:4 (<i>Dalet</i>) 25:5 (<i>He</i>)
	25:6-7	25:6-7	25:6-7	25:6c-7 (<i>Waw</i>) 25:6 (<i>Zain</i>) 25:7 (<i>Het</i>)
25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-10	25:8-10	25:8 (<i>Tet</i>) 25:9 (<i>Yod</i>) 25:10 (<i>Kaph</i>)
25:12-15	25:12-15	25:11-15	25:11-14	25:11 (<i>Lamed</i>) 25:12 (<i>Mem</i>) 25:13 (<i>Nun</i>) 25:14 (<i>Samek</i>)
25:16-22	25:16-21	25:16-18	25:15-18	25:15 (<i>Ain</i>) 25:16 (<i>Pe</i>) 25:17 (<i>Zade</i>) 25:18 (<i>Qoph</i>)
		25:19-21	25:19-21	25:19 (<i>Resh</i>) 25:20 (<i>Shin</i>) 25:21 (<i>Taw</i>)
	25:22	25:22	25:22	25:22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an acrostic (cf. NJB's strophes). However, two letters are missing and two are doubled (Jewish Study Bible, p. 1309).
- B. It is dominated by emphatic prayer requests.
 1. COHORTATIVES
 - a. v. 2 – “do not let me be ashamed,” BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE (this root is used four times in this Psalm; it is not so much embarrassment as it is the exposure of faithlessness)
 - b. v. 20 – “do not let me be ashamed, same as a., but *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (*inclusio*)
 2. IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - a. v. 2 – “do not let my enemies exult over me, BDB 763, KB 836, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. v. 7 – “do not remember the sins,” BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT (this root is used three times in vv. 6-7)
 - c. v. 21 – “let integrity and uprightness preserve me,” BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 3. IMPERATIVES
 - a. v. 4 – “make me know Your Ways,” BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil*
 - b. v. 4 – “teach me Your paths,” BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel*
 - c. v. 5 – “lead me in Your truth,” BDB 201, KB 231, *Hiphil*
 - d. v. 5 – “teach me,” same as b.
 - e. v. 6 – “remember,” BDB 269, KB 268, *Qal*
 - f. v. 7 – “remember,” same as e.
 - g. v. 16 – “turn to me,” BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal*
 - h. v. 16 – “be gracious to me,” BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal*
 - i. v. 17 – “bring me out of my distress,” BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil*
 - j. v. 18 – “look upon my affliction,” BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal*
 - k. v. 18 – “forgive all my sin,” BDB 669, KB 1157, *Qal*
 - l. v. 19 – “look upon my enemies,” same as j.
 - m. v. 20 – “guard my soul,” BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal*
 - n. v. 20 – “deliver me,” BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil*
 - o. v. 22 – “redeem Israel,” BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal*

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-3

¹To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in You I trust,

Do not let me be ashamed;

Do not let my enemies exult over me.

³Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed;

Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

25:1-3 The psalmist fears being ashamed by his enemies but in the midst of his fear he expresses his faith in YHWH's promised victory.

He characterizes himself as one who

1. lifts his soul to YHWH – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT, which denotes continual action (cf. Ps. 86:4; 143:8)
2. trusts in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, which denotes a settled action/condition
3. waits for YHWH – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, AB (p. 155) suggests it is from another root with the same letters that means “to call” or “to invoke”

Because of this he is confident that he will not be

- a. ashamed (*inclusio*, cf. v, 20; Ps. 31:1)
- b. exulted over (cf. Ps. 41:11)

but that his enemies will be (cf. v. 3b). In a sense those who trust in YHWH are witnesses of His character (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God at Ps. 9:10b). How they live and trust gives powerful evidence of the reality and character of YHWH.

25:3

NASB, NKJV,

REB “without cause”

NRSV, LXX “wantonly”

NJB “groundlessly”

JPSOA “disappointed, empty-handed”

NET Bible “thwarted”

Peshitta “vanity”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 938, KB 1229) can be understood in two ways.

1. without cause (cf. Ps. 7:4)
2. to no effect (cf. Isa. 55:11; Jer. 50:9)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:4-7

⁴Make me know Your ways, O LORD;

Teach me Your paths.

⁵Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation;

For You I wait all the day.

⁶Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,

For they have been from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

**According to Your lovingkindness remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.**

25:4-7 Notice the string of powerful emphatic IMPERATIVES which requests YHWH's action on behalf of the one who trusts in Him.

1. know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) His ways (BDB 202, cf. vv. 4,8,9,12)
2. teach (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) him His paths (BDB 73, cf. vv. 4,10)
3. lead (BDB 201, KB 231, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) him in His truth (BDB 54, see Special Topic at Psalm 12:1)
4. teach (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) me

The one who trusts (and waits, vv. 5c, 21b) wants to know YHWH in both personal fellowship and revelatory truth. Based on this truth and lifestyle obedience, he then requests that YHWH

1. remember His character (cf. v. 7b,c), see Special Topic at Ps. 9:10b
 - a. compassion – BDB 933 (v. 5)
 - b. lovingkindness – BDB 338 (cf. v. 6,7, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - c. goodness – BDB 375 (v. 7)
2. do not remember the sins (BDB 308) of his youth (cf. Job 13:26)
3. do not remember his transgression (BDB 833)

24:4 “ways...paths” The revelatory truths of YHWH were viewed as a well marked/worn road or trail (see note at Ps. 1:1). There was no confusion about what to do, only the need for obedience to the well-marked path (cf. Ps. 139:24). God's path is often described as level, straight, unobstructed, clearly visible.

24:6 “For they have been from of old” The psalmist is asking YHWH to act towards him (and Israel, cf. v. 22) in the consistent ways that He has displayed in the past (cf. Ps. 89:49). In essence the psalmist wants the covenant God to remember His covenant promises. He has acted in the past, now please act again for Your people and purposes. Even though the psalmist and Israel have sinned foolishly, please let Your covenant love (*hesed*, i.e., covenant loyalty) and Your basic character (i.e., goodness and mercy, cf. Ps. 23:6), forgive the humble sinner (cf. vv. 8-11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:8-11

⁸Good and upright is the Lord;

Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

⁹He leads the humble in justice,

And He teaches the humble His way.

¹⁰All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth

To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

¹¹For Your name's sake, O LORD,

Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

25:8-11 Many of the key words and concepts from vv. 4-7 are repeated in this strophe. Remember this is an acrostic psalm. All of the psalmist's poetic license and creativity are being used.

1. v. 8a extols YHWH's character, as did vv. 6,7
 - a. good (BDB 373)
 - b. upright (BDB 449)
2. vv. 8b-9 again mention YHWH's teaching and leading, as did vv. 4-5

The two added thoughts are the descriptive words about the one taught and led.

1. sinners (BDB 308), v. 8
2. humble (BDB 776), v. 9 (twice)

The paths of YHWH are characterized as

1. lovingkindness (cf. vv. 6,7)
2. truth (cf. v. 5)

25:10 “paths. . .testimonies” See Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation at Psalm 1:2.

▣ **“to those who keep His covenant”** Notice the emphasis, not just on knowledge (cf. vv. 4-5) but obedience (cf. Deut. 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6,16,20; Ps. 103:18). Obedience is not the mechanism of acceptance and forgiveness, which is YHWH but the result of meeting Him and being informed of His will. Jesus said it so well in Luke 6:46, also note Eph. 2:8-9 and then 1:4; 2:10. Grace is always first (cf. v. 11)! It is received by faith but it is a faith that must be lived out (cf. James 2:14-26).

▣ **“covenant”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT (תִּירָב)

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological or cognate definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will is clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-38 (YHWH’s action). Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue between the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal

of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

25:11 Any hope of forgiveness is based on the unchanging character of YHWH (cf. Ps. 102:26-27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:10b) and His Messiah (cf. Heb. 13:8). It is because of His name and character (cf. Ps. 79:9).

▣ **“for it is great”** Once we know the character of God (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48) and the truth of God, our sins and their consequences become more evident to us. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 3) brought a revelation of our rebellion and its consequences!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:12-15

¹²Who is the man who fears the LORD?

He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

¹³His soul will abide in prosperity,

And his descendants will inherit the land.

¹⁴The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,

And He will make them know His covenant.

¹⁵My eyes are continually toward the LORD,

For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

25:12-15 As in strophes 4-7 and 8-11, the same themes continue here. Notice how the faithful follower is characterized.

1. he fears YHWH, vv. 12,14, cf. Ps. 15:4; 103:11,13; 115:11; 118:4
2. he knows YHWH's covenant, v. 14
3. his eyes are continually toward YHWH, v. 15

Notice what YHWH will do for him.

1. He will instruct him in the way, v. 12, cf. Ps. 16:11; 139:24
2. He will provide good (BDB 373) for him and his descendants, v. 13
3. He reveals to him His truths, v. 14
4. He will keep his feet on the path and out of harm, v. 15

25:12 “choose” There is a theological balance in the Bible between the sovereign acts of YHWH and His demand that humans choose Him and His ways (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Josh. 24:14-15). We are responsible for our choices! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believer vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

25:14

NASB, NKJV,

NJB

"secret"

NRSV

"friendship"

TEV

"friend"

LXX

"empowerment"

JPSOA

"counsel"

REB

"confides"

The Hebrew word (BDB 691, KB 745) can mean (cf. Job 15:8; Ps. 111:1)

1. confidential discussion – Job 29:4; Ps. 55:14
2. secret counsel – Job 15:8; Pro. 11:13; 20:19; 25:9
3. circle of confidants – Ps. 89:7; Jer. 15:17; 23:18,22

These connotations are fluid and interchangeable. There is a special consultation, fellowship, and impartation of knowledge between the covenant God and His faithful followers.

25:15 As YHWH's eyes (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6) are continuously on those who fear Him and obey Him, so too, the faithful continue to be faithful by keeping their full and focused attention on Him (cf. Heb. 12:2)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:16-22

- ¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me,
For I am lonely and afflicted.**
- ¹⁷The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses.**
- ¹⁸Look upon my affliction and my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.**
- ¹⁹Look upon my enemies, for they are many,
And they hate me with violent hatred.**
- ²⁰Guard my soul and deliver me;
Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.**
- ²¹Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.**
- ²²Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles.**

25:16-21 This strophe documents the psalmist's problems.

1. I am lonely
2. I am afflicted
3. his heart has troubles
4. he is in distress
5. his enemies are many
6. they hate him with violent rage
7. he fears shame

In light of these things he asks YHWH

1. to turn to him (i.e., pay attention to him, cf. Ps. 69:16; 86:16)
2. to be gracious to him
3. to look upon/know his problems
4. to forgive His sins (cf. v. 18; Ps. 32:1; 51:2; 103:3)
5. to guard his soul (cf. Ps. 86:2)
6. to deliver him

His reasons for YHWH doing these things for him are

1. he takes refuge in YHWH
2. he asserts either his or YHWH's integrity and uprightness (because of v. 18b it is best to see these as characteristics of YHWH. AB (p. 159) suggests they are personified agents of YHWH)
3. he waits for YHWH (cf. Ps. 25:3)

25:22 I think this is a separate closing statement (one verse beyond the acrostic pattern). The King represents the people. This is the psalmist's final prayer request and it is national in scope. Redeem (BDB 804, KB

911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14) Your covenant people (i.e., “Israel”), for Your eternal redemptive purposes (see Special Topic at Introduction to Psalm 2).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the prayer requests of verses 4-7.
2. List the psalmist’s problem in verses 16-21.
3. How would you summarize the message of this Psalm?
4. How would you apply this Psalm to your life?

PSALM 26

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Protestation of Integrity and Prayer for Protection	A Prayer for Divine Security and Redemption	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	The Prayer of a Good Person	Prayer of the Blameless
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
26:1-7	26:1-5	26:1-3	26:1-3	26:1 26:2 26:3
		26:4-5	26:4-5	26:4-5
	26:6-8	26:6-7	26:6-7	26:6-8
26:8-12		26:8-10	26:8-10	
	26:9-10			26:9-10
	26:11-12	26:11-12	26:11	26:11-12
			26:12	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm, like much of Wisdom Literature, is based on the OT concept known as "the two ways" (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1). There is prosperity for those who obey YHWH's word and condemnation for those who do not (i.e., the cursings and blessings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29).

- B. The psalmist apparently has been accused of some covenant violation. The best guess is idolatry.
- C. Verse 9 implies an end-of-life separation between the faithful and unfaithful. The afterlife in the OT is a vague (cf. Job 14:7-12,13-14; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 73:24; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:1-4) concept but progressive revelation (i.e., NT) clarifies the issue (cf. Matt. 25:46; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; I Corinthians 15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

- A. Evidence for the resurrection
 - 1. Fifty (50) days later at Pentecost, the resurrection had become the key note of Peter's sermon (cf. Acts 2). Thousands who lived in the area where it happened believed!
 - 2. The lives of the disciples were changed radically from discouragement (they were not expecting resurrection) to boldness, even martyrdom.
- B. Significance of the resurrection
 - 1. Shows Jesus was who He claimed to be (cf. Matt. 12:38-40 prediction of death and resurrection)
 - 2. God put His approval on Jesus' life, teaching, and substitutionary death! (cf. Rom. 4:25)
 - 3. Shows us the promise to all Christians (i.e. resurrection bodies, cf. I Corinthians 15)
- C. Claims from Jesus that He would rise from the dead
 - 1. Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,22, 23; 20:18-19; 26:32; 27:63
 - 2. Mark 8:31; 9:1-10, 31; 14:28,58
 - 3. Luke 9:22-27
 - 4. John 2:19-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16
- D. Further Study
 - 1. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
 - 2. *Who Moved the Stone?* by Frank Morrison
 - 3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, "Resurrection," "Resurrection of Jesus Christ"
 - 4. *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof, pp. 346, 720.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-7

- ¹Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity,
And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.**
- ²Examine me, O LORD, and try me;
Test my mind and my heart.**
- ³For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.**
- ⁴I do not sit with deceitful men,
Nor will I go with pretenders.**
- ⁵I hate the assembly of evildoers,
And I will not sit with the wicked.**
- ⁶I shall wash my hands in innocence,**

**And I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
⁷That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving
And declare all Your wonders.**

26:1-7 This strophe asserts the psalmist's desire to be vindicated by YHWH. He has been accused of some evil, possibly idolatry.

1. vindicate – BDB 1047, KB1022, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:8; 17:2-3; 35:24; 43:1; YHWH tests His people, cf. Jer. 11:20; 12:3; 20:12; see Special Topic at Ps. 11:4b
2. examine me – BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 139:23
3. test my mind – BDB 650, KB 707, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:9; the mind (lit. “kidneys”) and heart were idioms for the whole person (i.e., thoughts, motives, actions)

The author then lists the reasons why he should be vindicated.

1. I have walked in my integrity – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 3b and v. 11a; Job 4:6; Ps. 7:8; 25:21; 41:12; 78:72; 101:2; Pro. 2:7; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6
2. I have trusted in YHWH without wavering – notice the two VERBS.
 - a. trusted – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 13:5; 52:8; this is a settled condition
 - b. without wavering – BDB 588, KB 609, *Qal* IMPERFECT which is an ongoing need (cf. Heb. 10:23); similar imagery occurs in Ps. 5:8 and 18:36
3. I have walked in Your truth – BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* PERFECT with *waw*; truth here means faithfulness, not creedal
4. I do not sit with deceitful men – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 1:1 (this may refer to idolatry, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 54)
5. I do not go with pretenders – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. I hate the assembly of evil doers – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 31:6; 139:21
7. I will not sit with the wicked – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT
8. I will wash my hands in innocence – BDB 934, KB 1220, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 73:13; Numbers 8 and 9 are ritual acts performed in national worship events (cf. Deut. 21:6)
9. I will go about Your altar – BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* COHORTATIVE, this refers to some kind of ritual dance or march, cf. Josh. 6:3-15; Ps. 43:3-4; 48:12
10. I will proclaim all Your wonders (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1)
 - a. singing aloud – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
 - b. proclaim – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 9:1; 40:5; 75:1

Notice the variations between PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS. Remember time is not part of Hebrew VERBS, just completed or ongoing action.

☐ Notice how the opponents of faithful followers are characterized.

1. deceitful men (i.e., idolators, worthless, BDB 996, see Special Topic at Ps. 24:4)
2. pretenders (i.e., hypocrites, BDB 761, KB 824, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE)
3. the assembly of evil doers (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)
4. wicked (BDB 957)

Also, all the psalmist's positive actions could be understood as not performed by his opponents. He is innocent and asks for vindication. They are guilty and deserve condemnation.

The list of descriptive terms for his opponents (cf. Ps. 1:5; 5:10; 15:2-5) is expanded in the next strophe.

5. sinners (BDB 308)
6. men of bloodshed (BDB 60 CONSTRUCT BDB 196, cf. Ps. 5:6; 55:23; 139:19)
7. wicked schemers (BDB 273, cf. Ps. 37:7), AB suggests this refers to idols (p. 163)
8. offer bribes (BDB 1005), cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Ps. 15:5

One wonders who these people are. Are they covenant people who live faithless lives or non-covenant people with no light? God help us, they seem to be people who had light, truth, revelation and have chosen to reject it!

26:3 “lovingkindness” See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

26:5 “the assembly of evildoers” The word “assembly” (*qahal*, BDB 874) is the OT background to the NT designation of the church, *ekklesia* (lit. “the called out ones,” i.e., the church) used in the LXX to translate *qahal*.

The idea is that there are two kinds of assemblies (cf. Matt. 7:13-14)

1. the faithful people of God – Ps. 22:22,25; 35:18; 40:9,10; 89:5; 107:32; 149:1
2. the evildoers (i.e., idolaters, cf. Ps. 31:6)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:8-12

⁸O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house

And the place where Your glory dwells.

⁹Do not take my soul away *along* with sinners,

Nor my life with men of bloodshed,

¹⁰In whose hands is a wicked scheme,

And whose right hand is full of bribes.

¹¹But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;

Redeem me, and be gracious to me.

¹²My foot stands on a level place;

In the congregations I shall bless the LORD.

26:8-12 This strophe parallels the thoughts of vv. 1-7. The psalmist again lists his qualification for acceptance and his opponents’ actions/motives for rejection.

The psalmist’s qualifications:

1. I love the temple – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT
2. I walk in integrity – BDB 1070, cf. v. 1
3. my foot stands on a level place (cf. Ps. 27:11). This is imagery for the clear path, the level way of YHWH’s covenant, cf. Ps. 119:105

The psalmist asks God to act toward him differently than the way He acts toward the wicked.

1. Do not take my soul away along with sinners (i.e., “gather,” BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. This VERB is used literally of “harvest” (cf. Isa. 62:9). It came to be used of death (cf. Jdgs. 2:10; II Kgs. 22:20; II Chr. 34:28).
2. Do not take my life with men of bloodshed

These people are characterized by bloodshed, wicked schemes, and bribery. There is a clear obvious lifestyle difference between the faithful follower and the faithless Israelite who performs the acts of worship and participates in the ritual but there is no lifestyle effect (cf. Matt. 7:15-27)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

I. Old Testament

- A. Those who heard the twelve (ten) spies’ report, Numbers 14 (cf. Heb. 3:16-19)
- B. Korah, Numbers 16
- C. Eli’s sons, I Samuel 2, 4
- D. Saul, I Samuel 11-31
- E. False prophets (examples)
 1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22 (ways to know a false prophet)
 2. Jeremiah 28
 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- F. False prophetesses
 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 2. Nehemiah 6:14
- G. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:13-23
4. Those spoken of in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8
5. The Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
7. Those of I Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
10. False teachers, II Peter 2:19-22; Jude vv. 12-19
11. antichrists, I John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. I Corinthians 3:10-15
2. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

26:8 This imagery refers to the tabernacle of the wilderness (cf. Exodus 25-31, 36-40), but later came to refer to the temple in Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah. It was where YHWH dwelt among humans (i.e., between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies). Faithful followers longed to be in YHWH's presence (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-5).

Verse 6 also refers to the tabernacle/temple (cf. Ps. 24:3-4).

26:11 Even though the psalmist believes he is innocent, he knows that YHWH is pure and holy and all humans are not (cf. Isa. 53:6; Rom. 1:18-3:18). The closer one comes into YHWH's fellowship the more the awareness of personal sin (i.e., omission and commission) becomes a reality. Psalm 19:11-14 expresses this truth well.

26:11b Because of these things he asks YHWH to

1. redeem him – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14
2. be gracious to him – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:16

He believes YHWH will vindicate him so he will bless YHWH

1. with songs, v. 7
2. with testimony, v. 7
3. with blessing, v. 12 (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT)

26:12 “congregations” The MT is PLURAL but it may be an example of the PLURAL OF MAJESTY. The NRSV, TEV, REB have the SINGULAR. The NET Bible makes the PLURAL refer to the “worshippers” (cf. Knox Translation). The PLURAL form appears only here and Ps. 68:26.

▣ **“I shall bless the LORD”** This refers to public affirmation of one’s faith, trust, hope, and allegiance to YHWH (cf. Rom. 10:9-13), probably in a worship setting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does YHWH test the mind and heart?
2. Does verse 6 imply a priest is the author?
3. Define the word “wonders” (v. 7).
4. Explain verse 12a in your own words.

PSALM 27

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Fearless Trust in God	An Exuberant Declaration of Faith	An Act of Devotion and a Prayer for Deliverance (Song of Trust)	A Prayer Of Praise	In God's Company There Is No Fear
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
27:1-3	27:1-3	27:1 27:2 27:3	27:1 27:2-3	27:1 27:2 27:3
27:4-6	27:4-5 27:6	27:4 27:5 27:6	27:4-6	27:4 27:5 27:6 27:6c
27:7-10	27:7-10	27:7-9a 27:9b-10	27:7-9a 27:9b-10	27:7-9a 27:9b-10
27:11-14	27:11-13 27:14	27:11-12 27:13-14	27:11-12 27:13-14	27:11-12 27:13-14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The theme from Psalm 26:8,12; Ps. 27:4; and Ps. 28:2 on being in God's house (i.e., tabernacle or temple) may be why these Psalms are placed together. In a sense Psalm 27 continues and fulfills the "trust in the LORD without wavering" theme of Ps. 26:1.
- B. This psalm has such beautiful parallelism.
- C. No one knows for sure the procedural criteria nor the person(s) involved in structuring the psalter as we know it (and for that matter, the whole OT). It is a faith presupposition that the Spirit guided the editorial and collection process, as He did the writing of Scripture.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1-3

**¹The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the defense of my life;
Whom shall I dread?
²When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.
³Though a host encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me,
In spite of this I shall be confident.**

27:1-3 This psalm characterizes what YHWH is to the psalmist.

- 1. light – BDB 21, i.e., this could refer to:
 - a. instruction – Pro. 6:23
 - b. guide – Ps. 43:3
 - c. YHWH's presence – Ps. 4:6; 44:3; 89:15
 - d. life and vitality – Job 33:28; Ps. 36:10; Micah 7:8, see *UBS Handbook* p. 261

The concept of "light" was a powerful image in the ancient world. Darkness was to be feared but light was a blessing. The imagery of God as light had several connotations (cf. Isa. 60:1,19-20; Micah 7:8; and John 8:12).

- 2. salvation – BDB 447, this could refer to
 - a. safety – Ps. 12:6; Job 5:4,11
 - b. rescue – Ps. 50:23; 69:14; 85:7,9
 - c. rock of. . . – Ps. 95:1
 - d. horn of. . . – Ps. 18:3

- 3. refuge – BDB 731 (i.e., place of safety, cf. Ps. 28:8; 31:2-3; 37:39-40; II Sam. 22:31-32)

There is no "to be" VERB in verse 1, lines 1 and 3. The other VERBS are IMPERFECTS (like v. 3) which speak of ongoing action. Note the contrast with the state of the evildoers/adversaries/enemies in verse 2. Their status (PERFECTS) is set. They have stumbled and are fallen. The IMPERFECT VERBS continue in verse 3. Life has its trials, problems, incidents, but God is always with us and for us!

What are faithful followers to do in light of the experiences of life in a fallen world?

- 1. fear not, vv. 1,3 (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECTS)

2. dread not, v. 1 (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 118:6; Rom. 8:31)
3. be confident, v. 3 (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)

True faith is a personal relationship with God, a new worldview, a new lifestyle (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)! All of this is possible because of the character and revelation of God. He is with and for us and wants to have a daily personal relationship with us, even in a fallen world with sinful people!!

27:2 Notice the different words used to describe the opponents.

1. evildoers, v. 2 – BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. adversaries, vv. 2,12 – BDB 865 III
3. enemies, vv. 2,6 – BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

They are said to have “stumbled” and “fell” (cf. Jer. 50:32). Both are *Qal* PERFECTS. Their fate and judgment are viewed as already having occurred! Their doom is sure!

▣ **“to devour my flesh”** The TEV has “kill me” and this is the thrust of the idiom (cf. Ps. 14:4). It may imply the evildoers act like wild carnivores!

The RSV thinks it means “to slander” (i.e., “backbiting,” based on Dan. 3:8), but the NRSV uses a more literal translation.

27:3 This verse strongly implies that the psalmist is a king. The context of Psalm 1-41 suggests it is David.

Note the word play between “host” (הַחֹמֶה, BDB 334) and “encamp” (הַחֹמֶה, BDB 333). These kinds of sound plays occur often in Hebrew poetry.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:4-6

⁴One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the LORD

And to meditate in His temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;

In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;

He will lift me up on a rock.

⁶And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,

And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

27:4-6 The psalmist lists a series of prayer requests. Notice the parallel of PERFECT and IMPERFECT VERBS.

1. “I have asked” – BDB 981, K 1371, *Qal* PERFECT denotes a completed act
2. “I shall seek” – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERFECT denotes an intense continuing prayer life

In interpreting the psalms we must remember that these requests serve two functions.

1. they reflect the heart and mind (i.e., new worldview, cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) of a faithful follower
2. they contrast and clearly reveal the heart and mind of false followers

Those who oppose God’s leaders oppose God! It is not vengeance that is sought, but justice and the revelation of YHWH’s character!

27:4 Note the fervent requests.

1. I may dwell (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) in the house of the LORD all the days of my life (cf. Ps. 23:6)

2. I may behold (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, often used of prophet’s visions, BDB 302) the beauty (see note below) of the LORD
3. I may meditate (*Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) in His temple



NASB, NKJV,
NRSV, JPSOA,

REB	“beauty”
NASB Margin	“delightfulness”
LXX	“pleasantness”
TEV	“goodness”
NJB	“sweetness”

The Hebrew word (BDB 653) basically means “pleasant,” “delightful.” The NOUN is used mostly in Proverbs and describes several different things. In the context of the temple it may denote a vision of God or the afterlife. It may be parallel to “goodness” (BDB 375) in verse 13, which also denotes a perfect setting with God.

Here is a sample of the use of this term in Proverbs.

1. NOUN – Pro. 3:17; 15:26; 16:21
2. ADJECTIVE – Pro. 22:18; 23:8; 24:4
3. VERB – Pro. 2:10; 9:17; 24:25

27:5 The results of his prayers are:

1. YHWH will conceal (BDB 860, KB 1049, *Qal* IMPERFECT) him in His tabernacle (cf. Ps. 76:2) in his day of trouble.
2. YHWH will hide (BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) him in the secret place of His tent.
3. YHWH will lift him up (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT) upon a rock (i.e., YHWH Himself).

▣ I wonder if the Jews of old quoted this verse just before

1. the temple fell to Babylon, Egypt, Neo-Babylon
2. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) violated the temple
3. the Romans invaded the temple under Titus (A.D. 70)

We must remember that biblical promises have effect only

1. to faithful followers
2. in light of God’s larger purposes in history

27:6 Because YHWH has responded in such wonderful ways to the psalmist’s prayers (i.e., “my head will be lifted up above my enemies”)

1. he will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy (lit. “sacrifices of shouts of joy”; verses such as this imply a verbal sacrifice was used by Jews following the destruction of their temple to simulate the annual sacrifices no longer possible)
2. he will sing praises to YHWH

There are three COHORTATIVE VERBS in this verse. The psalmist believes he will be in YHWH’s presence (i.e., the temple).

1. I will offer a sacrifice – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal*
2. I will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal*
3. I will sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:7-10

**⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice,
And be gracious to me and answer me.**

**⁸*When You said, “ Seek My face,” my heart said to You,
“Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”***

**⁹Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!**

**¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the LORD will take me up.**

27:7-10 Often in the Psalms separate strophes repeat the emphasis or theme of previous strophes. This could be explained as

1. another level of purposeful parallelism
2. the editorial process whereby
 - a. words
 - b. themes
 - c. moods
 - d. actions

which are similar in sound, meaning, or theology are grouped together by later editors/compiler.

27:7 “Hear. . .cry” The first is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570), so common in the Psalms as a way of beseeching God. The second VERB, “cry” (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT), also denotes prayer. This verse repeats the focus of verse 4.

The context of the prayer request is

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

27:8 Notice that NASB and NKJV have an introductory phrase in italics (i.e., “When You said”), which denotes that it is not part of the Hebrew text. The NRSV and NJB translations assume the speaker is the psalmist.

The VERB “seek” (BDB 134, KB 152) is repeated

1. first an opening *Qal* IMPERATIVE (PLURAL)
2. second a *Piel* IMPERFECT (SINGULAR, the opening VERB of v. 8 is also SINGULAR)

These seem to represent a dialogue between YHWH and the psalmist. One calls the other appropriately responds. The VERB “seek” denotes a call to a personal relationship (cf. Ps. 24:6; Deut. 4:29), which denotes worship and obedience. In this Psalm, because of the emphasis on prayer, it may parallel vv. 4 and 7.

▣ **“face”** This is a Hebrew idiom for close personal contact (cf. Ps. 24:6), where both “seek” and “face” occur together.

27:9 There is a series of JUSSIVE VERBS which denote the things the psalmist asks YHWH not to do.

1. do not hide Your face from me – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE, cf. Ps. 69:17; 102:2; 143:7
2. do not turn away Your servant in anger – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE

3. do not abandon me – BDB 643, KB 693, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 94:14, unless they cease to be faithful followers (cf. Jer. 12:7)
4. do not forsake me – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

Notice the personal element involved in all these requests!

27:10

NASB “for”
NKJV “when”
NRSV “if”
TEV “may”
NJB, JPSOA,
REB “though”
NET Bible “even if”

The introductory CONJUNCTION (BDB 471-475) has a wide semantical field. Only context can determine meaning. Obviously this context does not allow a clear translation.

▣ **“my father and my mother forsake me”** This is the same VERB which was used in verse 9. Even though the translation of this phrase is uncertain, the meaning is obvious. One’s closest human companions or family may leave but the covenant God will never leave (cf. Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5; Isa. 49:15; Heb. 13:5)!

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 266) mentions that TEV, NEB, JB take the verse as expressing a theoretical possibility to make a strong literary point, not a real abandonment.

One wonders if this may reflect YHWH’s promise to David and his descendants in II Samuel 7. Possibly verse 13 relates to II Sam. 7:28.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:11-14

**¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a level path
Because of my foes.**

**¹²Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.**

**¹³*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.***

**¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.**

27:11-14 This strophe starts out with more prayer requests (v. 11-12), moves to a testimony of faith (v. 13), and concludes with good advice (v. 14).

27:11-12 The prayer requests are

1. teach me Your way – BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:4-5; 86:11
2. lead me in a level path – BDB 634, KB 685, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 5:8; 26:12; 139:24; this is the OT background for the church being called “The Way,” cf. “Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; John 14:6
3. do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The psalmist gives two reasons for his prayers in this strophe.

1. because of my foes (lit. “those who lie in wait for me”), v. 11
2. for false witnesses have risen against me, v. 12

27:13 This verse expresses the psalmist’s faith (“believed” – BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and worldview. He believed there was

1. justice in this life because of the character of YHWH
2. a future life with YHWH in the land of the living (cf. Job 14:7-12,13-14; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 73:24; 116:8-9; 142:5; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; 38:11)

27:14 In light of the psalmist’s faith and worldview he admonishes others to

1. wait for the LORD – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:3; 37:34; 40:1; 62:1,5; 130:5; Pro. 20:22; Isa. 8:17; 25:9; 33:2
2. be strong – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 31:24
3. let your heart take courage – BDB 54, KB 65, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
4. wait for the LORD – BDB same as #1

Some scholars (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 439) see verse 14 as

1. self-admonition (the psalmist)
2. a priestly oracle given at the temple

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is “fear” the key word in the first strophe?
2. Verse 2 and Psalm 23:6 sound similar, what does this imagery imply?
3. Are verses 4-6 about the tabernacle or the temple?
4. Why is verse 9 so troubling? Does the covenant God abandon His followers?
5. What does verse 10 mean? Is it literal or figurative?

PSALM 28

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for Help, and Praise For Its Answer	Rejoicing in Answered Prayer	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer For Help	Petition and Thanksgiving
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
28:1-5	28:1-2	28:1-2	28:1-3	28:1
				28:2
	28:3-5	28:3-5		28:3
			28:4-5	28:4
				28:5
28:6-9	28:6-7	28:6-7	28:6-7	28:6
				28:7
	28:8-9	28:8-9	28:8-9	28:8-9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-5

**¹To You, O LORD, I call;
My rock, do not be deaf to me,
For if You are silent to me,
I will become like those who go down to the pit.**

**²Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help,
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.**

**³Do not drag me away with the wicked
And with those who work iniquity,
Who speak peace with their neighbors,
While evil is in their hearts.**

**⁴Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices;
Requite them according to the deeds of their hands;
Repay them their recompense.**

**⁵Because they do not regard the works of the LORD
Nor the deeds of His hands,
He will tear them down and not build them up.**

28:1-5 There is some disagreement of how to divide the strophes in this Psalm (look at front page of this chapter). NASB has vv. 1-5, 6-9, so I will use it. The first strophe is a lament and the second a psalm of thanksgiving.

The psalmist prays for

1. YHWH to hear him when he prays
2. YHWH not to drag him away like the wicked

In verse 4 he uses three IMPERATIVES to describe what God should do to the wicked.

1. give them (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) according to their deeds (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Ecck. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12)
2. give them according to their evil practices (VERB assumed from #1)
3. give them (same VERB as #1) according to their actions (lit. “work of their hands”)
4. reward (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) them dire reward (lit. “dealings,” BDB 168)

28:1 “My rock” This imagery speaks of permanence, strength, stability, protection (see full note at Ps. 18:2).

▣ **“do not. . .”** These are two IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. hear – do not be deaf, BDB 361 II, cf. Ps. 35:22; 39:12; 83:1; 109:1 (parallel to silent, BDB 364)
2. v. 2 – do not drag me away, BDB 604 (i.e., possibly like an animal or a prisoner of war)

▣ **“the pit”** The term (BDB 92, cf. Ps. 88:4; 143:7; Pro. 28:17) is a synonym for *Sheol*. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:5. It probably related to

1. a dug grave (cf. Isa. 14:9; Ezek. 32:25)
2. a hole in the hill for burial
3. an opening which goes into *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 30:4; Pro. 1:12; Isa. 14:15; 38:18; Ezek. 26:20)

28:2 “When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary” This gesture has several connotations.

1. an act of blessing after a sacrifice by a priest – Lev. 9:22 (i.e., some sacrifices were lifted up to YHWH)
2. an act on the part of a worshiper after a sacrifice of incense – Ps. 141:2
3. a gesture toward the sanctuary – Ps. 134:2

4. a posture of prayer, hands raised, cf. Exod. 9:29 (Moses); I Kgs. 8:22 (Solomon); Lam. 2:19; 3:41 (Israel); Luke 24:50 (Jesus); I Tim. 2:8 (believers)
5. a posture for praise, adoration, or public confession – Ps. 63:4
6. a way to show YHWH’s power as His staff was lifted up in Moses’ hands (cf. Exod. 17:8-12)

Here it is meant to symbolize a clean life (cf. I Tim. 2:8), open to God and a life that recognizes its need to receive from God (see negative usage in Ps. 44:20).



NASB “toward Your holy sanctuary”

NASB margin,

NRSV footnote “the innermost place”

NJB “Holy of Holies”

JPSOA “inner sanctuary”

LXX “court”

REB “shrine”

This Hebrew term (BDB 184 I) basically means “back part,” “innermost.” In I Kings 6:16,19,20,21, 22,23,31; 7:49; 8:6,8 it refers to the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod. 26:31-35), where the ark of the covenant stood between Solomon’s giant *cherubim*.

Faithful followers in the Old Covenant faced the temple (cf. I Kings 8, Solomon’s great prayer at the dedication of the Temple) when they prayed because it was there that YHWH dwelt between the wings of the *cherubim*. It was where heaven and earth met. The ark of the covenant was YHWH’s footstool.

However, in the New Covenant, God is present in all places (cf. John 4:20-24). The new temple is Jesus (cf. John 2:19,21)!

28:3,5 “Because. . .” Verses 3 and 5 list the activities and attitudes of the wicked (i.e., practical atheists).

1. who work iniquity, v. 3
2. who speak peace to their neighbor but have evil in their hearts (see Special Topic at Ps. 4:7), works of God, v. 3
3. who do not regard the works of God, v. 5 (God’s people must “regard” who He is by what He has done, cf. Deut. 32:7; Ps. 107:43; Jer. 2:10; Hos. 14:9)
4. who do not regard the deeds of God (parallel), v. 5, cf. Isa. 5:12

28:5 The last line of verse 5 tells what God will do to them (compare Jer. 1:10).

1. tear them down – BDB 248, KB 256, *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 5
2. not build them up – BDB 124, KB 139, *Qal* IMPERFECT, negated, v. 5

The three IMPERFECTS of verse 5 denote the continuous actions of the wicked. Their lives are characterized by ignoring God and hurting others, therefore, God’s judgments are also ongoing (i.e., perennial destruction, cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 1:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:6-9

**⁶Blessed be the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.**

**⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;**

**Therefore my heart exults,
And with my song I shall thank Him.**

⁸The LORD is their strength,

And He is a saving defense to His anointed.
⁹Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

28:6-9 A radical mood swing occurs at verse 6. This strophe spells out the reasons why YHWH is to be blessed (v. 6a).

1. He hears his prayer
2. He is both his strength and shield
3. He is his refuge

In verses 8 and 9 the focus changes from the King (i.e., “His anointed”) to His covenant people. As YHWH saved the King, may he now save His people! This fluidity between the SINGULAR and PLURAL is common in the Psalms.

▣ **“Blessed be the LORD”** This is a recurrent theme in the Psalms. He is blessed by His faithful followers for many reasons, but all of them come back to who He is and what He has done! This phrase became a liturgical formula (cf. Ps. 18:46; 28:6; 31:21; 41:13; 66:20; 68:35; 72:18; 89:52; 106:48; 119:12; 124:6; 135:21; 144:1). Let all that has breath praise the Lord!

28:7 As verses 3 and 5 describe the wicked, verse 7 describes the faithful follower.

1. his heart trusts in Him – BDB 105, KB 1200, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 112:7 (note the theological connection between human’s trust and divine deliverance/salvation, cf. Ps. 22:4-5; 25:1-3; 28:7; 31:14-15; 86:2; see note at NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 646)
2. he is helped by God – BDB 740, KB 810, *Niphal* PERFECT
3. his heart exults – BDB 759, KB 831, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*
4. he thanks Him with song – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (continual praise)

Just a brief comment about the MT verses the LXX. There was probably a more ancient Hebrew text behind both of them. There are MSS in the DSS that follow the MT and others follow the LXX. The early church used the LXX almost exclusively. Verse 7 is a good example of their translating a different Hebrew text. The LXX has (see note in AB, p. 173)

“The Lord is my helper and my protector; in him my heart hoped,
 And I was helped and my flesh revived, and from my will I shall acknowledge him.”

▣ **“shield”** See note at Ps. 3:3.

28:8 “their” The UBS Text Project gives “to His people” a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

1. to them – וּמִלְּ (NKJV, JPSOA)
2. to His people – וּמֵעַל (NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB)

The Septuagint uses #2, as do some Hebrew manuscripts. Apparently one Hebrew letter has fallen out of the MT.

▣ **“His anointed”** See Special Topic: Messiah at Ps. 2:2. See similar usage in Ps. 18:50.

28:9 There is a series of IMPERATIVES directed in prayer to YHWH, beseeching Him to act on behalf of the covenant people.

1. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 106:47
2. bless – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. shepherd – BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (The NASB Study Bible [p. 765] makes the comment that “shepherd” links up with Psalm 23 and probably marks off Psalm 23-28 as a

collection of psalms linked by several common themes)

4. carry (i.e., “lift up”), *Peil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Isa. 40:11; 63:9

Several Psalms close with a corporate focus (i.e., Ps. 3:8; 15:7; 25:22; 29:11; 51:18-19; 130:8).

▣ **“Your inheritance”** YHWH gave a land allotment to all the nations (cf. Deut. 32:9), but the descendants of Abraham were His special people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; I Kgs. 8:51; Ps. 33:12). He showed this by His promised exodus out of Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). He displayed His power and love (cf. Deut. 9:29). Moses beseeched YHWH not to judge His sinful people because the pagan nations would not understand (cf. Deut. 9:26-29). His people were meant to reveal His character to all nations (see Special Topic at the Intro. to Psalm 2). But if they continued in sin and idolatry there was rejection (cf. Ps. 106:40; Ezek. 36:22-23).

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic: Forever at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the OT view of death?
2. Is verse 4 the same truth as Gal. 6:7?
3. Is verse 5c related to Isa. 6:9-10 or Jer. 1:10?
4. Why do psalms that reflect an individual’s thoughts and situation end in communal IMPERATIVES?

PSALM 29

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Voice of the LORD in the Storm	Praise to God in His Holiness and Majesty	Hymn to the God of the Storm	The Voice of the LORD in the Storm	Hymn to the LORD of the Storm
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2
29:3-9	29:3-4 29:5-7 29:8-9	29:3-4 29:5-6 29:7-8 29:9	29:3-4 29:5-6 29:7-9	29:3-4 29:5-6 29:7-9b 29:9c-11
29:10-11	29:10-11	29:10-11	29:10-11	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a psalm about natural revelation (i.e., God reveals Himself to everyone through creation).
 1. Psalm 19:1-6 (silent voice in creation)
 2. Romans 1:19-23 (knowledge of God from nature)
 3. Romans 2:14-16 (inner moral witness)
- B. The imagery of the psalm occurs to encompass
 1. YHWH's defeat of the chaos of initial creation (i.e., water, cf. vv. 3,10, the term "flood" [BDB 550] occurs only here and Genesis, chapters 6-11)
 2. YHWH's power in a storm (cf. vv. 3-9; cf. Ps. 18:7,15)

- C. YHWH, not *Ba'al*, defeats, controls, and sends water. Many scholars note the numerous similarities to Ugaritic mythology and other ANE literature.
- D. The UBS *Handbook* asserts that this psalm is a chiasm (p. 275).
1. fourfold use of YHWH in verses 1-2 and 10-11
 2. “strength” (BDB 738) in vv. 1 and 11
 3. waters referred to in vv. 3 and 10
 4. YHWH’s majesty referred to in vv. 4 and 10
 5. trees mentioned in vv. 5 and 9
 6. geographical places in vv. 6 and 8
- My problem with this is that a chiasm usually places the most significant theological statement at the middle but verse 7 does not fit this pattern.
- E. This Psalm may refer to
1. a theophany as YHWH is depicted as coming in the imagery of a violent storm
 2. but the thrust is a military victory (cf. v. 11)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1-2

- ¹Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in holy array.

29:1-2 “Ascribe” This VERB (BDB 396, KB 393, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is repeated three times. It basically means “give glory to God (cf. Deut. 32:3). This same pattern is also in Psalm 96:7-8 and I Chr. 16:28-29. The threefold repetition denotes a superlative emphasis.

29:1

- NASB “sons of the mighty”
NKJV “you mighty ones”
NRSV, TEV “heavenly beings”
NJB, LXX “sons of God”
JPSOA “divine beings”
REB “you angelic powers”

The MT has “sons of gods” (lit. “sons of *Elim*,” BDB 119 CONSTRUCT BDB 42). It refers to the angels (cf. Gen. 6:2 [“sons of *elohim*”]; Ps. 103:20-21) or the heavenly angelic council (cf. Exod. 15:11; II Kgs. 22:19; Ps. 82:1; 86:6-8).

See Special Topic: The Sons of God below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: “the sons of God” in Genesis 6

- A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase “the sons of God.” There have been three major interpretations
1. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Genesis 5)
 2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings

3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants of Cain's line (cf. Genesis 4)
- B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth's line
1. The immediate literary context of Genesis 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the godly line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth.
 2. The rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
 3. The phrase, "the sons of God," though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings.
 - a. Deut. 14:1, "sons of YHWH your God"
 - b. Deut. 32:5, "His sons"
 - c. Exod. 22:8-9; 21:6, possibly Levitical Judges
 - d. Psalm 73:15, "Thy children"
 - e. Hosea 1:10, "sons of the Living God"
- C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings
1. This has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God's will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy).
 2. The phrase ("sons of God") is used overwhelmingly in the OT for angels.
 - a. Job 1:6
 - b. Job 2:1
 - c. Job 38:7
 - d. Psalm 29:1
 - e. Psalm 89:6,7
 - f. Daniel 3:25
 3. The intertestamental book of I Enoch, which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls and *Jubilees* 5:1, interprets these as rebellious angels (I Enoch 12:4; 19:1; 21:1-10).
 4. The immediate context of Genesis 6 seems to imply that "the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation.
 5. I Enoch even asserts that Noah's Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff).
- D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants of Cain's line
1. There are several ancient translations that support this view.
 - a. Targum or Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates "sons of God" as "sons of nobles."
 - b. Symmachus' (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated "sons of God" as "the sons of the kings."
 - c. The term *elohim* is sometimes used of Israelite leaders (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8; Psalm 82:1,6, note NIV and Net Bibles).
 - d. *Nephilim* is linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4. *Gibborim* is plural of *Gibbor* meaning "a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power."
 2. This interpretation and its evidence is taken from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 106-108.

E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages

1. the phrase refers to Sethites

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| a. Cyril of Alexander | e. Calvin |
| b. Theodoret | f. Kyle |
| c. Augustine | g. Gleason Archer |
| d. Jerome | h. Watts |

2. the phrase refers to angelic beings

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| a. writers of the Septuagint | f. Tertullian | k. Olford |
| b. Philo | g. Origen | l. Westermann |
| c. Josephus (<i>Antiquities</i> 1.3.1) | h. Luther | m. Wenham |
| d. Justin Martyr | i. Delitzsch | n. NET Bible |
| e. Clement of Alexandria | j. Hengstenberg | |

F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2? Note the three theories:

1. They are the giants that resulted from the union between angels and human women (cf. Num. 13:33).
2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”

This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses’ first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the phrase “sons of God” is used consistently, if not exclusively, for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) “sons of God” as “angels of God”
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. II Peter 2 and Jude speak of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode
I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth, but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).
5. I think that one reason many of the events of Genesis 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e., similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women)

is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel's dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible (II Peter 2) for the holding place of the angels that kept not their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).

▣ **“glory and strength”** These are two common terms applied to YHWH.

1. glory – BDB 458
2. strength – BDB 738

29:2 “Worship” This is the fourth in a series of four opening IMPERATIVES (lit. “bow down,” BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishpael* IMPERATIVE). This is what faithful followers do as they come to His temple in holy array. This involves not just clothing but covenant obedience.

▣ **“His name”** This is an idiomatic way of referring to YHWH Himself. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Psalm 5:11-12.

▣

NASB	“in holy array”
NKJV	“in the beauty of holiness”
NRSV, NJB	“in holy splendor”
JPSOA, NASB margin	“majestic in holiness”
REB, NET	“in holy attire
LXX, Peshitta	“in His holy court”

The ambiguous phrase (BDB 214 CONSTRUCT BDB 871) also appears in three other temple worship contexts (cf. Ps. 96:9; 110:3; I Chr. 16:29). The TEV footnote offers three possible ways to translate the phrase.

1. when He (YHWH) appears (from Ugarit root, cf. TEV, i.e., YHWH Himself; this then would be similar to the theophany of Exodus 19-20)
2. garments of worship (Aaron's garments are described in a similar way in Exod. 28:2)
3. in His beautiful temple (seems to reflect LXX)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:3-9

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;

The God of glory thunders,

The LORD is over many waters.

⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful,

The voice of the LORD is majestic.

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,

And Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.

⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;

The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve

And strips the forests bare;

And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

29:3-9 This strophe is dominated by “the voice of the LORD.” There seem to be two ways to view it.

1. YHWH the creator, cf. vv. 3,10 (cf. Genesis 1; Psalm 93)
 2. YHWH the true storm God and giver of rain (cf. vv. 3-9, i.e., in opposition to *Ba'al*'s claims)
- Notice the way YHWH's voice is characterized (vv. 4-9).

1. powerful (BDB 470)
2. majestic (same root in v. 2b, BDB 214)
3. breaks the cedars (VERB, BDB 990, KB 1402 repeated in v. 5)
4. makes Lebanon and Sirion (i.e., Mt. Hermon, cf. Deut. 3:9) jump
5. lightning (cf. Ps. 18:12,14) flames trees
6. makes the wilderness shake (VERB, BDB 296, KB 297, repeated in v. 8)
7. makes deer calve
8. strips forests bare (BDB 362 I)

It is important to remember that the spoken word was a very important and pervasive theological concept to the ancient Hebrews.

1. creation by the spoken word – Genesis 1
2. power of the spoken word of God – Isa. 14:24; 25:1; 45:23; 46:10; 55:11; 59:21; Matt. 24:35
3. the Messiah is called “the Word” in John 1:1-5,14; Rev. 19:13
4. the imagery of the returning Messiah with a two-edged sword for a tongue – Rev. 1:16; 2:12

29:6 “Lebanon. . .Sirion” These are geographical references north of the Promised Land of Canaan. The term “Sirion” for Mt. Hermon is rare (cf. Deut. 3:9). Because of this and the obvious context or “storm” imagery, many modern scholars have seen this Psalm as a reworking of an original hymn to *Ba'al* (Canaanite storm god). The *Ras Shamra* texts are opening much of the veiled imagery of the OT in light of Canaanite mythology. Hebrew authors often took the descriptions of pagan deities and changed them to descriptions and titles of YHWH. They knew He was the one and only true God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Psalm 2:7).

For a good brief discussion of ancient cosmology see IVP *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 169-174.

29:9a The same VERB (BDB 296, KB 297) translated “shake” in verse 8 (twice) is now used of calving (cf. Job 39:1) and of Sarah giving birth in Isa. 51:2.

If one tries to keep a synonymous parallelism between v. 9b and v. 5b, then he must change “hinds” (MT, UBS Text Project gives it a “B” rating) to “oaks” (cf. TEV, NJB, same consonants, just a change of vowels). This is done to try to continue the possible chiasmic pattern.

The NET Bible (p. 885 #21) suggests an emendation of “forests” to “female mountain goats” in order to maintain the synonymous parallelism between verse 9a and 6. JPSOA has a footnote, “brings ewes to early birth” as an option (BDB 362 II).

29:9c The summary of all this action (i.e., the physical results of a strong thunderstorm) is that in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

YHWH the creator is providing agricultural abundance by rain in its season. The Creator is also the Sustainer! (See a good article on “Providence” in IVP *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 681-683.)
The NJB makes v. 9c the beginning of vv. 10-12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:10-11

¹⁰The LORD sat *as King* at the flood;

Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

¹¹The LORD will give strength to His people;

The LORD will bless His people with peace.

29:10 The word “King” is not in line 1 but is in line 2. The flood refers (1) to Genesis 6-9 (cf. Gen. 6:17) or (1) to the original creation (cf. Gen. 1:2).

The concept of YHWH as King goes back to I Sam. 8:7. It is stated as a theological assertion in Psalm 10:16 and here. The imagery is of YHWH sitting on a throne (cf. Ps. 2:4; 113:5 and the imagery in Isaiah 6) or having a scepter.

▣ **“sat. . .sits as King”** The VERB “sat” or “enthroned (BDB 442, KB 444) forever” is a recurrent theme (cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 9:7; 10:16; 29:10; 66:7; 145:13; 146:10; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19).

▣ **“over the flood”** The PREPOSITION implies

1. power and authority over the waters of chaos (LXX)
2. YHWH in heaven is above the upper waters (i.e., rains), above the clouds (cf. Gen. 1:6-7; Ps. 148:4)

The term “flood” (BDB 550) is found only in Genesis and here in Psalm 29:10.

29:11 Because YHWH is King, His people are secure. His promises are secure. His purposes for the future are secure!

Even amidst the “storm” when the powers of nature seem so severe, YHWH’s people are at peace (cf. Matt. 8:23-27; 14:22-33)! Jesus also demonstrated this divine power over the wind and waves!

PSALM 30

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Death	The Blessedness of Answered Prayer	Thanksgiving For Healing	A Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving After Mortal Danger
<p><u>MT Intro</u> “A Psalm; A Song at the Dedication of the House.” <i>A Psalm of David.</i></p>				
30:1-5	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3
	30:4-7	30:4-7	30:4-5	30:4-5
30:6-9			30:6-7	30:6-7
	30:8-10	30:8-10	30:8-10	30:8-9
30:10-12				30:10-12
	30:11-12	30:11-12	30:11-12	

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
 FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

The introduction, which is in the MT, is not original (i.e., not in DSS psalms). It was obviously added later (cf. Introduction to Psalms 7, 60). I do not accept these introductions as inspired (see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*, p. 243), therefore, I do not comment on them.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-5

¹I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

²O LORD my God,
I cried to You for help, and You healed me.

³O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;
You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

⁴Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.

⁵For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for a lifetime;
Weeping may last for the night,
But a shout of joy *comes* in the morning.

30:1-5 The psalmist extols and praises YHWH for deliverance from death.

30:1 “I will extol” This VERB (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense) has two primary meanings.

1. to exalt, extol (here of YHWH), cf. Exod. 15:2; Ps. 34:3; 99:5,9; 107:32; 118:28; 145:1; Isa. 25:1
2. to lift up (referring to praise of YHWH), cf. II Sam. 22:47; Ps. 18:46; 21:13; 46:10; 57:5,11

This praise is given because YHWH has acted.

1. He lifted up (BDB 194, KB 222, *Piel* PERFECT) the psalmist, v. 1 (this term was used of drawing water from a well and may refer to divine rescue from the pit, cf. v. 4).
2. He did not let the psalmist’s enemies rejoice (BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), cf. Ps. 25:2; 41:11.
3. He healed him (BDB 750, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*), v. 2.
4. He brought his soul up from *Sheol* (BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* PERFECT), v. 3.
5. He has kept him alive (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* PERFECT), v. 3.

30:2 “O LORD my God” This is two of the most common designations of Israel’s Deity (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1).

1. YHWH – God as Savior, the covenant-making God, cf. Gen. 2:4
2. *Elohim* – God as creator and provider of all life on this planet, cf. Gen. 1:1

Notice how this Psalm starts with this title (v. 2) and ends with this title (v. 12). This is typical of Hebraic literary style (i.e., *inclusio*).

SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD’S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?

1. Healing was a significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It was intended primarily to confirm the radically new message about God and His kingdom.
3. It shows the heart of God for hurting people.
4. God has not changed (Mal. 3:6) and He still acts in love in healing.
5. There are examples where healing did not take place.
 - a. Paul, II Cor. 12:7-10

- b. Trophimus, II Tim. 4:20
- 6. Sin and sickness were associated in the rabbis and James (cf. John. 9:2; James 5:13-18).
- 7. Healing is not a guarantee of the New Covenant. It is not part of the atonement described in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 103.
- 8. There is true mystery about why some are healed and some are not.
- 9. It is possible that although healing is present in every age, there was a significant increase during Jesus' lifetime; this increase will occur again just before His return.

▣ **“You healed me”** See Special Topic below.

30:3 “Sheol. . .pit” These two terms (synonymous parallelism) refer to the grave or the holding place of the dead. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

Notice that antithetical parallelism common in this Psalm. It demonstrates, in very real-to-life ways, the “two ways” of Psalm 1.

For a good brief discussion of “pit” see IVP, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 646-647.

30:4

NASB “godly ones”

NKJV “saints”

NRSV “faithful ones”

TEV “faithful people)

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 339) is formed from the NOUN *hesed* (BDB 338), which denoted covenant loyalty (See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7).

1. On God's part; He is faithful to His covenant promises.
2. On the faithful follower's part; he/she must be obedient and steadfast to their covenant obligations.

It becomes a common title in the Psalms for faithful covenant followers (i.e., Ps. 4:3 and many more). Several translations (TEV, NJB) see verses 4-5 as a separate strophe imploring faithful followers to join in the praise of YHWH (see paragraph divisions on the front page of this Psalm).

In this context they are called to

1. sing praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

▣

NASB, NRSV,

JPSOA “name”

NKJV “remembrance”

TEV “remember”

NJB “unforgettable”

The MT has the NOUN “remembrance” or “memorial” (BDB 271, cf. Hos. 12:5). Here it refers to YHWH's gracious character and powerful acts on behalf of His people (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:5; 97:12; 102:12; 111:4; 145:7). The Hebrew concept of “name” is here, but not the word. Both occur in parallel in Ps. 135:13 and Isa. 26:8. Also notice the focus on “memorial-name” in Exod. 3:15.

30:5 This verse has captured the wonder of grace to fallen humanity (antithetical parallel). This is a fallen world but YHWH would not allow the broken fellowship of Eden to be permanent. There are consequences

to sin and rebellion but by His grace, mediated through a faithful follower's faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9), there is forgiveness and restoration (cf. Ps. 103:8-14; Isa. 54:7-8)! The only permanent consequence is unbelief. It is the unpardonable sin (see Special Topics below).

The first two lines of verse 5 have no VERBS. The TENSE structure emphasizes the theological point
"For a moment His anger
For a lifetime His favour!"

The AB (p. 182) suggests that "lifetime" (BDB 213) means "eternal life," based on Ps. 21:4. However, Ps. 91:16 is the normal OT usage of this word, which refers to this life.

Just an added thought about "anger" in this context. The OT saw a linkage between sin and sickness (cf. James 5:13-18). Jesus seems to modify this view in John 9:1-12. If God judged us in light of our sin we would all be sick and dying. The wonderful truth is we deserve "anger" but we get mercy, grace, and love! We, however, are not all healed (see Special Topic at v. 2)! Yet He is with us in our sufferings (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; II Cor. 4:17).

▣ **"His anger"** This root (BDB 60) is related to "nose" (i.e., red face) or "snort" (unspoken but vocal sign of human emotion). See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Ps. 2:4-6

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT IS SIN UNTO DEATH?

A. Hermeneutical considerations

1. proper identification must be related to the historical setting of I John
 - a. the presence of gnostic false teachers in the churches (cf. 2:19,26; 3:7; II John 7)
 - (1) "Cerinthian" Gnostics taught that the man Jesus received the Christ spirit at his baptism and that the Christ spirit left before his death on the cross (cf. 5:6-8)
 - (2) docetic Gnostics taught that Jesus was a divine spirit, not a true human being (cf. 1:1-3)
 - (3) Gnosticism revealed in the writings of the second century reflected two different views about the human body
 - (a) since salvation was a truth revealed to the mind, the human body was irrelevant to the spiritual realm. Therefore, whatever it desired it could have. These are often referred to as antinomian or libertine Gnostics.
 - (b) the other group concluded that since the body was inherently evil (i.e. Greek thought), any bodily desire should be shunned. These are called ascetic Gnostics.
 - b. these false teachers had left the church (cf. 2:19), but their influence had not!
2. proper identification must be related to the literary context of the whole book
 - a. I John was written to combat false teaching and assure the true believers
 - b. these two purposes can be seen in the tests of true believers
 - (1) doctrinal
 - (a) Jesus was truly human (cf. 1:1-3; 4:14)
 - (b) Jesus was truly God (cf. 1:2; 5:20)
 - (c) humans are sinful and responsible to a holy God (cf. 1:6,10)
 - (d) humans are also forgiven and made right with God by
 - i. Jesus' death (cf. 1:7; 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:9-10,14; 5:6-8)
 - ii. faith in Jesus (cf. 1:9; 3:23; 4:15; 5:1,4-5,10-12,13)
 - (2) practical (positive)
 - (a) lifestyle obedience (cf. 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:2-3)

- (b) lifestyle love (2:10; 3:11,14,18,23; 4:7,11-12,16-18,21)
- (c) lifestyle Christlikeness (does not sin, cf. 1:7; 2:6,29; 3:6-9; 5:18)
- (d) lifestyle victory over evil (cf. 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4)
- (e) His word abides in them (cf. 1:10; 2:14)
- (f) they have the Spirit (cf. 3:24; 4:4-6,13)
- (g) answered prayer (cf 5:14-15)

(3) practical (negative)

- (a) lifestyle sin (cf. 3:8-10)
- (b) lifestyle hate (cf. 2:9,11; 3:15; 4:20)
- (c) lifestyle disobedience (cf. 2:4; 3:4)
- (d) love the world (cf. 2:15-16)
- (e) deny Christ (denies Father and Son, cf. 2:22-23; 4:2-3; 5:10-12)

3. proper identification must be linked to specific items in the relevant text (cf. 5:16-17)
 - a. does the term “brother” of v. 16 relate to both those committing a sin not leading to death and to those committing a sin leading to death?
 - b. were the offenders once members of the church (cf. 2:19)?
 - c. what is the textual significance of:
 - (1) no article with “sin”?
 - (2) the VERB “sees” as a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL with AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE?
 - d. how can the prayers of one Christian (cf. James 5:15-16) restore eternal life “zōē” to another without the sinner’s personal repentance?
 - e. how does v. 17 relate to the types of sin (unto death, not unto death)?

B. Theological problems

1. should an interpreter try to link this text with
 - a. the “unpardonable” sin of the Gospels
 - b. the “once out” sin of Hebrews 6 and 10

The context of I John does seem parallel to the unpardonable sin of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day (cf. Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:2-29) as well as the unbelieving Jews of Hebrews 6 and 10. All three groups (Pharisees, unbelieving Jews, and Gnostic false teachers) heard the gospel clearly, but refused to trust Jesus Christ.

2. should modern denominational questions be a theological grid to view this text?

Evangelicalism has overemphasized the beginning of the Christian experience and neglected the ongoing lifestyle evidences of true faith. Our modern theological questions would have shocked first century Christians. We want “certainty” based on selected biblical “proof-texts” and our own logical deductions or denominational biases. Our theological questions, grids, and distinctives reflect our own insecurities. We want more information and clarification than the Bible provides, so our systematic theologies take some small chunks of Scripture and weave huge webs of logical, western, specific doctrines!

Jesus’ words in Matthew 7 and Mark 7 were adequate for the early church! Jesus looks for disciples, not decisions, long term lifestyle faith, not short-term emotional faith (cf. Matt. 13:10-23; John 8:31-59). Christianity is not an isolated past act, but an ongoing repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. Christianity is not a ticket to heaven, purchased in the past, nor a fire insurance policy taken out to protect one from a lifestyle of selfish, godless living!

- Does the sin unto death refer to physical death or eternal death? John's use of *zōē* in this context implies the contrast refers to eternal death. Is it possible that God takes home (physical death) sinning children? The implication of this context is that (1) the prayers of fellow believers and (2) the personal repentance of the offender combine to restore the believers, but if they continue in a lifestyle that brings reproach on the believing community, then the result may be an "untimely" or early physical departure from this life (cf. *When Critics Ask* by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, p. 541)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:6-9

**⁶Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,
"I will never be moved."**

**⁷O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;
You hid Your face, I was dismayed.**

**⁸To You, O LORD, I called,
And to the LORD I made supplication:**

**⁹"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?"**

30:6-9 This strophe seems to reflect the fulfillment of the covenant promises of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. YHWH wanted to prosper His people to show the world His character. The psalmist, as a faithful follower, is asserting what YHWH did for him.

- prospered him
- gave him stability (i.e., "I will never be moved")
- made him strong (i.e., figure of a mountain; LXX has "my majesty")
- answered his prayers
- protected him from death so he could praise YHWH's faithfulness (BDB 54)

The AB (p. 182) sees this strophe as a warning against the sin of overconfidence. The UBS *Handbook* (p. 282) sees it as his past inappropriate experience. However, I prefer the Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 confidence. The *Handbook* asserts that this Psalm, like Psalm 29, is a chiasmic pattern. If this is true then the middle of the chiasm should be the main truth. But note the middle would be verse 6, which both the UBS *Handbook* and AB say is an inappropriate experience. You cannot have it both ways!

30:7b It is unsure how v. 7b fits with v. 7a,c. The two VERBS (PERFECTS) describe a settled condition.

- You hid Your face – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* PERFECT, "face," refers to personal presence, he felt YHWH had left him, was not available, did not hear his prayers.
- I was (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT) dismayed – BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE. This term means "disturbed," "dismayed," or "terrified," cf. Job 4:5; 23:15; Ps. 6:4; 83:18; 90:7; 104:29; Isa. 13:8; 21:3; Jer. 51:32; Ezek. 26:18.

The JPSOA sees v. 7b in contrast to v. 8, YHWH made the psalmist "firm as a mighty mountain," but if/when He hid His face, it brought "terror." Therefore, he called out to YHWH in prayer (v 8). Prosperity alone, even covenant prosperity (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) is not enough! We need God! We need to feel His presence and pleasure! We were created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8) for fellowship with God. Nothing, nothing else can meet this need!

30:9 There are two rhetorical questions which, in context, expect a "no" reply.

▣ **“dust”** This (BDB 779) is a figurative expression for death (cf. Psalm 22:15,19; Isaiah 26:19; 29:4) or *Sheol*/pit. Humans were made of clay/dust (cf. Gen. 2:7) and to dust we return at death (cf. Gen. 3:19).

▣ **“will dust praise You?”** In the OT death was a conscious, but silent, existence (cf. Ps. 6:5; 88:11-12; 115:7; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 38:18-19).

▣ **“Your faithfulness”** This is “amen” (BDB 54); see Special Topic at Psalm 12:1.

YHWH is faithful (BDB 54) and loyal (BDB 338) to His covenant. He is the One who does not change (cf. Mal. 3:6; Ps. 102:27; James 1:17; also note Heb. 13:8). Our hope, as faithful followers, is in the unchanging, merciful character of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:10-12

¹⁰“ **Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;**

O Lord, be my helper.”

¹¹**You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;**

You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

¹²**That *my* soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.**

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

30:10-12 This strophe starts out with three prayer requests (IMPERATIVES).

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be gracious – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. be my helper (BDB 740, KB 810) – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice what YHWH’s response caused in the psalmist.

1. turned him from mourning into dancing
2. loosed his sackcloth and girded him with gladness (“gladness” is a poetic way of contrasting sackcloth, i.e., festival garments)
3. caused him to sing praises and he will not be silent
4. caused him to give thanks forever

30:11 “sackcloth” This was worn as a sign of mourning.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, II Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 12:16,21-23; I Kgs. 21:27; I Chr. 10:12; Neh. 1:4

10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

30:12 “that my soul may sing praise to You” The “my soul” is literally “glory” (BDB 458). The same consonants also mean “liver.” The UBS Text Project (p. 209) suggests it could be understood as

1. referring to the psalmist himself (i.e., inner most being – liver) by the term (LXX, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA)
2. a VOCATIVE, “O Glory,” referring to YHWH

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does God heal all faithful followers?
2. Explain why verse 5 is such an important verse.
3. Is verse 6 a positive or negative statement?
4. How are verses 9 and 12 related?

PSALM 31

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Complaint and of Praise <u>MT Intro</u> “For the Choir Director.” A Psalm of David.	The LORD, A Fortress in Adversity	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer of Trust in God	Prayer In Time of Ordeal
31:1-5	31:1-2	31:1-2	31:1-2	31:1-2a 31:2b-3
	31:3-5	31:3-5	31:3-5	31:4-5b 31:5c-7a
31:6-8	31:6-8	31:6-8	31:6-8	31:7b-8
31:9-13	31:9-13	31:9-10 31:11-13	31:9-10 31:11-13	31:9 31:10 31:11 31:11c-12 31:13
31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-16 31:17-18
31:19-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19 31:20 31:21-22
31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There are so many Psalms where the author is seeking help from God against enemies. One wonders
 1. who are these enemies?
 2. why does the psalmist feel detached so often?
 3. were many of these written during the same period of the psalmist's life (probably David)?
- B. The psalmist faces several issues.
 1. personal sin and its mental and physical consequences (cf. vv. 1-12)
 2. personal attacks by
 - a. enemies
 - b. neighbors
 - c. acquaintances
- C. The actions of the enemies are characterized as
 1. trying to trap him in a net, v. 4
 2. trying to get him to regard idols, v. 6
 3. slandering him, vv. 11,13,20
 4. counseling together against him, vv. 13,20
 5. persecuting him, v. 15
 6. having lying lips, v. 18
 7. speaking arrogantly, v. 18
- D. Many/most of the Psalms in Book One have similar themes and wording. This may reflect an unknown editing or compiling agenda. There was a purposeful structure to the different books of Psalms (see Introduction to the Psalter) but moderns are not sure what it was.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:1-5

¹In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

Let me never be ashamed;

In Your righteousness deliver me.

²Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;

Be to me a rock of strength,

A stronghold to save me.

³For You are my rock and my fortress;

For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.

⁴You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,

For You are my strength.

⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit;

You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.

31:1-5 Notice the very personal way the author addresses YHWH. Notice the number of personal PRONOUNS. Biblical faith is a personal trust in a personal God. It is not initially about a creed or even a moral code but about a personal encounter! That encounter changes everything! All else is based on it.

▣ This strophe has several prayer requests.

1. Let me never be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE; this shame could be connected to David's sin (cf. Psalm 32, 51) or others' attack on his reputation or motives, cf. Ps. 25:2-3,20; 31:1,17; 35:26; 69:6; 119:6,46,78,80. Shame sometimes means abandonment by YHWH (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 621-627).
2. Deliver me – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. Incline Your ear to me – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2; 102:2
4. Rescue me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. Be my rock – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. Lead me – BDB 634, KB 685, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. Guide me – BDB 624, KB 675, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
8. Pull me out of their net – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

His prayer requests are based on

1. he has committed himself to YHWH, v. 5
2. YHWH has ransomed him, v. 5 (see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14)
3. YHWH is his strength, v. 4
4. YHWH is the God of truth/faithfulness, v. 5 (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)

31:1 “refuge” This alludes to a strong hiding place of safety and security. See note at Ps. 2:12.

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.

31:2 “rock” See note at Ps. 18:2. There are two different Hebrew words translated “rock”; in v. 2 – BDB 700; in v. 3 – BDB 849. Both refer to a place of stability, protection, and security (cf. Deut. 32:4,15,18,30).

31:3 “fortress” See note at Ps. 18:2.

▣ **“For Your name's sake”** See notes at Psalm 23:3 and 25:11. It represents YHWH's character. See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God at Ps. 9:10b.

31:3-4 Notice the series of IMPERFECTS that speak of continuous, ongoing actions.

1. lead – BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. guide – BDB 624, KB 675, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. pull out – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

31:4 “net” This was an instrument of hunting (BDB 440). It came to be used figuratively of hurting or capturing humans (cf. Ps. 9:15; 10:9; 35:7-8; 57:6; 140:5).

31:5 “into Your hand I commit my spirit” This was quoted by Jesus on the cross just before His death (cf. Luke 23:46).

This VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) has a wide semantic field. Here it denotes an ongoing trust. This trust is based on who God is (i.e., “God of truth,” “faithful God”), not the merits of the psalmist.

▣ **“hand”** See Special Topic at Psalm 7:3-4.

▣ **“spirit”** This is the Hebrew word *ruah* (BDB 924). Here it is the unseen life force connected to YHWH breathing life into Adam in Gen. 2:7. When it leaves the body that body goes to the holding place of the dead (*Sheol*, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BREATH, WIND, SPIRIT (רוּחַ and *pneuma*)

The Hebrew term *ruach* (BDB 924) and the Greek term *pneuma* (cf. John 3:5,8) can mean “spirit,” “breath” or “wind” (cf. John 3:5,8). The Spirit is often associated with creation (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:29-30; 147:14-18). The OT does not clearly define the relationship between God and the Spirit. In Job 28:26-28; Ps. 104:24 and Pro. 3:19; 8:22-23 God used wisdom (a FEMININE NOUN) to create all things. In the NT Jesus is said to be God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:1-3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3). As in redemption, so too, in creation, all three persons of the Godhead are involved. Genesis 1 itself does not emphasize any secondary cause.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:6-8

**⁶I hate those who regard vain idols,
But I trust in the LORD.
⁷I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul,
⁸And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a large place.**

31:6-8 This strophe is dominated by PERFECTS that denote a complete or settled condition.

1. I hate those who regard vain idols – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT. The intensity of the psalmist’s requests for YHWH to judge is based on his worldview (i.e., viewing the world as YHWH’s agent). He hates those who break or ignore YHWH’s covenant. The LXX has “You hate.”
2. I trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT; this is a recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 4:5; 13:5; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7; 31:6,14; 52:8; 56:3,4,11; 91:2. If “fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge” (cf. Pro. 1:7), then trust is the key to knowing Him personally.
3. YHWH sees his affliction – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT (cf. Exod. 3:7-8)
4. YHWH knows his trouble – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6)
5. YHWH has not given him into the hands of his enemy – BDB 688, KB 742, *Hiphil* PERFECT
6. YHWH has set his feet in a large place – BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:19; 118:5; a large place is the opposite of a narrow place/strait, which is an idiom of distress (cf. Ps. 4:1; 18:19; 118:5)

31:7 This verse has two *Qal* COHORTATIVES.

1. I will rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189
2. I will be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333



NASB “lovingkindness”

NKJV, LXX “mercy”

NRSV “steadfast love”

TEV “constant love”

NJB “faithful love”

JPSOA “faithfulness”

REB “unfailing love”

All of these English translations are trying to express the essence of the powerful covenant NOUN, *hesed*. It denotes YHWH’s unbreakable commitment to the covenant. See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:9-13

⁹Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;

My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body *also*.

¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow

And my years with sighing;

My strength has failed because of my iniquity,

And my body has wasted away.

¹¹Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,

Especially to my neighbors,

And an object of dread to my acquaintances;

Those who see me in the street flee from me.

¹²I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind;

I am like a broken vessel.

¹³For I have heard the slander of many,

Terror is on every side;

While they took counsel together against me,

They schemed to take away my life.

31:9-13 This strophe uses parts of the human body to express the psalmist’s distress (BDB 865 II).

1. eye (BDB 744), v. 9, cf. Ps. 6:7; 38:10
2. soul (BDB 659), v. 10 (i.e., *nephesh*, see note at Ps. 3:2)
3. body (BDB 105), v. 10
4. body (lit. “bones,” BDB 782), v. 10

Stress (like sin, cf. v. 10c; Psalm 32, 51) causes physical manifestations.

1. sorrow
2. sighing
3. failure of strength
4. bones wasting away (VERB, BDB 799, KB 898, *Qal* PERFECT, is used twice in this context, vv. 9 and 10 and only one other time in the OT, cf. Ps. 6:7)

More and more modern medicine is understanding the link between the mind and the body. They are a unity (cf. v. 12).

31:11 The slander and distress, which have had such physical consequences, also bring social consequences.

1. I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors.
2. I have become an object of dread to my acquaintances.
3. People flee from me.
4. I am forgotten (out of mind) as a dead man.

31:13 This verse describes the actions of his adversaries.

1. they slander him (i.e., their false words are the next line, “terror on every side”)
2. they counsel against him
3. they schemed (BDB 273, cf. Ps. 37:12) to take his life (parallel to #2)

In light of these actions, the IMPERATIVE “be gracious to me, O LORD” of verse 9 is understandable!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:14-18

¹⁴But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD,

I say, “ You are my God.”

¹⁵My times are in Your hand;

Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

¹⁶Make Your face to shine upon Your servant;

Save me in Your lovingkindness.

¹⁷Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You;

Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.

¹⁸Let the lying lips be mute,

Which speak arrogantly against the righteous

With pride and contempt.

31:14-18 This strophe has numerous emphatic prayer requests based on

1. the psalmist’s trust in YHWH (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 6), v. 14
2. YHWH is his God, v. 14
3. his life is in YHWH’s hand, v. 15

Here are the requests.

1. deliver me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:2; 18:17; 22:20; 31:2; 39:8; 51:14; 59:1; 69:14; 109:21; 119:170; 120:2; 142:6; 143:9; 144:7,11; this is the cry of the faithful follower’s heart, deliverance from the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of life in a fallen world
2. make Your face shine on me – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Num. 6:25-26; Ps. 4:6; 67:1; 80:3,7,19; 119:135
3. save me in Your lovingkindness – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, many times in the Psalms
4. let me not be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. let the wicked be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. let them be silent in Sheol – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. let the lying lips be dumb – BDB 47, B 57, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

31:15 “My times are in Your hand” Faithful followers believe that time and eternity are in God’s foreknowledge and control. Nothing surprises Him (cf. Job 14:5,16; 28:24; 31:4; 34:21; Ps. 139:1-16, esp. v. 16).

31:17 Notice the contrast.

1. the psalmist speaks to God
 - 2-3. the wicked are silent (i.e., dead) or else they speak arrogantly with pride and contempt
- You can know people by what they say (cf. Matt. 12:35-37). The tongue reveals the heart!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:19-22

**¹⁹How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!
²⁰You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.
²¹Blessed be the LORD,
For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.
²²As for me, I said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.**

31:19-22 This strophe describes YHWH’s “goodness” (BDB 375, cf. Ps. 145:7). Probably this strophe is to be understood after YHWH has answered the psalmist’s prayer requests found early in the psalm.

1. It is stored up for those who fear YHWH.
2. It is for those who take refuge in YHWH.
3. YHWH hides His people
 - a. in a secret place of His presence
 - b. in a shelter/pavilion
4. YHWH made His lovingkindness marvelous to the psalmist.
5. YHWH heard his supplications.

31:19 “before the sons of men” Not only does YHWH defend and protect, but He acknowledges our special relationship to Him before our enemies (cf. Ps. 23:5).

31:20 The secret place is the inner (or back) shrine of the temple/tabernacle (cf. Ps. 27:5). This was a special place where the personal presence of YHWH was manifested (i.e., ark of the covenant).

31:21 “in a besieged city” Although we do not know the historical setting of this Psalm, this phrase seems to be metaphorical. It describes a person who feels surrounded by wicked, evil, lying people.

Even though the psalmist feels isolated, he believes YHWH hears and will act on his behalf.

The UBS Text Project (p. 213) gives this reading an “A” rating versus “through distress,” found in NEB.

The JPSOA translates this phrase as if it characterized why YHWH should be “blessed,” v. 22a. He is strong and unchanging (i.e., “a veritable bastion”). The Jewish Study Bible margin links this to YHWH as “a rock of strength,” “a stronghold,” “a crag” (i.e., rock), and “a fortress” in verses 2-3 (p. 1316).

31:22 “I am cut off from before Your eyes” The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1316) interprets this phrase as meaning “absent from the temple” (i.e., II Chr. 26:21, where the same phrasing is used of Uzziah being unable, as a leper, to go into the temple). The *Niphal* form of this VERB (BDB 173, KB 202) is found only here in the OT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:23-24

²³O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!

The LORD preserves the faithful

And fully recompenses the proud doer.

²⁴Be strong and let your heart take courage,

All you who hope in the LORD.

31:23-24 As is true so often in the Psalms the last strophe is

1. a warning
2. an admonition
3. a corporate prayer

Here it is #2. The first VERBS of both verses are PLURAL IMPERATIVES.

1. love YHWH – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; usually this VERB refers to YHWH’s love or is SINGULAR of the psalmist’s love
2. be strong – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; it is followed by a synonym, BDB 54, KB 5, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE (Hebrew parallelism)

31:23 “His godly ones” This refers to faithful followers (cf. Ps. 30:4; 37:28; 50:5), not angels (cf. Ps. 29:1).

▣ The life experiences (and afterlife experiences) of

1. the faithful – BDB 52 I
2. the proud doer – BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCT BDB 144

are contrasted.

1. preserved – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. recompensed – BDB 1022, KB 1521, *Piel* PARTICIPLE

31:24 What a wonderful admonition for all faithful followers (cf. Ps. 27:14; 37:34; 62:5; 130:5; Isa. 25:9)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the psalmist in such trouble?
2. List the physical and social consequences of sin.
3. Explain “shame” in an OT context.
4. Is verse 21 literal or metaphorical?
5. Why do so many Psalms written an individual end in a corporate way?

PSALM 32

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Blessedness of Forgiveness and of Trust in God	The Joy of Forgiveness	Thanksgiving For Healing	Confession and Forgiveness	Candid Admission of Sin
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David. A Maskil				
32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2
32:3-7	32:3-5	32:3-4 32:5	32:3-4 32:5	32:3-4 32:5
32:8-11	32:6-7 32:8-9	32:6-7 32:8-9	32:6-7 32:8-9	32:6-7 32:8 32:9
	32:10-11	32:10-11	32:10-11	32:10 32:11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Because of the MT introduction many scholars believe this Psalm, like Psalm 51, describes David's sin (i.e., sexual encounter with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, cf. II Samuel 11), cover up (cf. II Samuel 12), and forgiveness (i.e., although the consequences of his sin destroyed his family). In Romans 4:7-8 Paul quotes verses 1-2 (LXX) as referring to David.

- B. This is surely possible but it may have a wider implication and purpose (cf. PLURALS of v. 11). Sin and its consequences are common to all humans (cf. Rom. 1:8-3:18), even covenant humans (cf. Romans 7; I John 1:5-10).
- C. The psalmist's physical problems were the merciful acts of God that would not allow the sinful covenant person to remain in his/her rebellion (cf. Heb. 12:7-13). There are consequences to sin, thank God, the God of mercy pursues us in spite of them. As sin abounds, grace does much more abound (cf. Rom. 5:20).
- D. One can tell which concepts, events, issues are central to a culture by the number of words used to describe it. Obviously Israel was concerned with covenant rebellion (cf. I Kings 8), as well as its forgiveness. There are many words for sin and rebellion.
- E. Psalm 31 and Psalm 32 may have been placed together by an editor or compiler, because they both discuss the physical result of sin (cf. Ps. 31:9-10; 32:3-4).
- F. The NASB Study Bible (p. 769) gives an interesting theory about the speakers.
1. dialogue between David and YHWH in the tabernacle, vv. 1-2
 2. David speaks to YHWH in the hearing of the gathered worshipers, vv. 3-7
 3. a priest addresses David on YHWH's behalf, vv. 8-10
 4. David speaks to the gathered worshipers, v.11
- G. This Psalm emphasizes
1. the sinfulness of humans
 2. the merciful character of God
 3. how a sinful human can become acceptable to a holy God (i.e., confession)
- Paul's use of vv. 1-2 in Romans 4, where he discusses OT examples of "justification by grace through faith" (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3; Eph. 2:8-9), reveals the context as an OT example of the theme developed and prioritized in the NT. This is the heart of how one is forgiven, although the mechanism for that forgiveness (i.e., the gospel of Christ) is not mentioned. It still clearly reveals the merciful, gracious availability of YHWH's forgiveness (i.e., "lifted and removed" and "covered").
- If YHWH can forgive David, He can forgive you! Receive it through confession and repentance! Then stand forgiven in the promises!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:1-2

**¹How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!**

**²How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!**

32:1 The term "blessed" (BDB 80, cf. Ps. 1:1, is used 26 out of 45 times in Psalms) is recurrent in Wisdom Literature and describes the faithful followers.

1. Job 5:17; Ps. 94:12 – disciplined by *Shaddai*
2. Psalm 1:1 – studies and walks in God's word

3. Psalm 2:12 – takes refuge in YHWH
4. Psalm 32:1-2 – sin is forgiven
5. Psalm 40:4; 84:12; Pro. 16:20 – trusts in YHWH
6. Psalm 41:1-3; Pro. 14:21 – considers the poor
7. Psalm 80:6 – strength is in YHWH
8. Psalm 89:12 – know joy and walk in the light of YHWH’s countenance
9. Psalm 119:2 – seek Him with whole heart, observe His testimony
10. Psalm 112:1; 128:1 – fears YHWH, walks in His ways
11. Psalm 146:5 – YHWH is his help
12. Proverbs 3:13 – finds wisdom
13. Proverbs 8:32,34 – listens to YHWH, keeps His ways
14. Proverbs 28:14 – fears YHWH
15. Proverbs 29:18 – keeps YHWH’s laws

The first two verses of this Psalm from the LXX are quoted by Paul in Romans 4:7-8 in his example of David as a blessed man because his sin was forgiven.

Notice the different words used to describe rebellion against YHWH (cf. v. 5).

1. transgression – BDB 833, KB 981; it denotes an intentional breaking of that which is God’s will (i.e., covenant)
2. sin – BDB 308, KB 306; it denotes missing (BDB 306) a set target, again not by ignorance but willfully
3. iniquity – BDB 730, KB 799; misdeed, guilt (#1,2,3 appear together in Exod. 34:7; Lev. 16:21; Job 12:23; here; Isa. 59:12; Ezek. 21:24; Dan. 9:24)
4. deceit – BDB 941, KB 636; means treachery, trickery, fraud (cf. Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:2-3)

The UBS *Handbook* mentions that the psalmist purposely alternated MASCULINE, FEMININE (twice) to show completeness (p. 303).

YHWH’s (note the PASSIVE PARTICIPLES) forgiveness is described as righteousness given to sinners based on God’s mercy and their repentance (this is the theological concept of imputed [cf. BDB 362, KB 359, Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6]).

1. forgiven (lit. “lifted and taken away”) – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Exod. 32:32; 34:7; Num. 14:18,19; Micah 7:18; same word negated in Exod. 23:21; Josh. 24:19; Job 7:21; Isa. 2:9
2. covered (i.e., puts out of sight, theological concept in Isa. 38:17; 43:25; Micah 7:19) – BDB 491, KB 487, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE

The result is a person with no deceit/guile (cf. John 1:47). This does not mean sinless, but repentant.

32:2 “man” This is the Hebrew word *Adam* (BDB 9). In the early parts of Genesis (Genesis 1-3) it refers to Adam, the original human creation, but it took on the sense of humanity in general.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:3-7

³When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.
⁴For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away *as with the fever heat of summer.* Selah.
⁵I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

**⁶Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.
⁷You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.**

32:3-7 This strophe contrasts two ways to deal with sin.

1. be silent, hide it
 - a. bones wasted away, cf. 31:9-10
 - b. groaning all day long
 - c. vitality (lit. “juicy,” BDB 545, cf. Num. 11:8; used here of body fluids) drained away (NET Bible suggests an emendation to “to my destruction,” p. 888 #29)
2. acknowledge, confess
 - a. YHWH forgives the guilt of sin (cf. Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Ps. 85:2)
 - b. sense of security returns
 - c. YHWH is a hiding place again
 - d. YHWH preserves him from trouble
 - e. he is surrounded with songs of deliverance

There is a play on YHWH’s hand; in judgment it was heavy (v. 4; Ps. 38:2; 39:10; Job 23:2) but in confession it protected him (vv. 6-7).

32:4,5,7 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

32:5 “I will confess” The parallelism of lines 1 and 2 demands a rare meaning of the VERB (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense). Usually the VERB in *Hiphil* means “thanksgiving,” but in a few contexts “confess” is the apparent meaning.

1. I Kgs. 8:33,35; II Chr. 6:24,26 it denotes “confess YHWH’s name”
2. here and in Pro. 28:13 the context implies “confess sin”

32:6 “in a time when You may be found” This ambiguous phrase can be understood in several ways.

1. there is an appointed/appropriate time for repentance (LXX, Vulgate, NKJV)
2. pray in time of need or distress (cf. II Chr. 15:4; emendation cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB)
3. MT has “at a time of finding” (cf. Ps. 103:8-14; Isa. 55:6). JPSOA translates this as “upon discovering [his sin].”

▣ **“in a flood of great waters”** Water, raging water, is often used as an idiom of trouble/distress/attack (cf. Ps. 69:1; 124:5; 144:7 and most beautifully in Isa. 43:2).

32:7 This refers to the tabernacle/temple. The songs of praise are worship songs or liturgy.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:8-11

**⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
⁹Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,
Otherwise they will not come near to you.
¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked,**

But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones;

And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

32:8-11 The psalmist speaks to himself (and others, v. 5) on YHWH's behalf. Here is the divine response, v. 8 (three COHORTATIVES)!

1. verse 5, I will confess my transgressions – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (see fuller note at v. 5)
2. verse 8, I will instruct you – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
I will teach you – BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
I will counsel you – BDB 419, KB 421, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 16:7

32:8 “in the way” This is an idiom for a godly life (cf. Ps. 1:1; 25:8-9).

▣ **“with My eye upon you”** This is an idiom of personal care and presence (cf. v. 18; Ps. 34:15 [quoted in I Pet. 3:12]; Job 36:7).

For “eye” used of YHWH see Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Psalm 2:4-6.

32:9 The person (PLURAL) who will not repent is described in terms of rebellious, domesticated animals (cf. Isa. 1:2-3). Fallen humanity lives on an animal level characterized by “more and more for me at any cost!”

▣ Again a contrast.

1. the wicked – many sorrows
2. the faithful follower (i.e., “he who trusts YHWH”), covenant loyalty and love will surround him (cf. v. 7b)

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Psalm 5:7.

▣ **“shall surround”** This VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT) is also used in v. 7 of songs of deliverance and here of YHWH's lovingkindness (also note Deut. 32:10; the ADJECTIVE is used in Ps. 34:7; 125:2). What a wonderful idiom of YHWH's presence and protection!

32:11 A series of PLURAL IMPERATIVES instructing the faithful follower.

1. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. shout for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the physical problems related to unconfessed sin. What does it mean to “confess”?
2. How are Psalm 32 and 51 related?
3. Explain what verse 6a means. Is there a time to confess which may pass (i.e., window of opportunity)?
4. Who is speaking in verses 8-9?

PSALM 33

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise to the Creator and Preserver No MT Intro.	The Superiority of the LORD in Creation and History	Hymn to God as Creator and LORD of History	A Song of Praise	Hymn to Providence
33:1-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5
33:6-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12
33:13-17	33:13-15 33:16-17	33:13-17	33:13-15 33:16-17	33:13-15 33:16-17
3:18-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The NASB Study Bible (p. 770) suggests this Psalm is part of a liturgy.
 1. Levitical choir
 - a. leader, vv. 1-3
 - b. choir, vv. 4-19
 2. gathered worshipers respond, vv. 22-23

- B. It has no MT title (like Psalms 1, 2, 10), but the “new song,” in verse 3, implies some major historical event. Because of vv. 16-17, probably it refers to a military victory.
- C. I am moved by the universal scope of YHWH’s purposes that include all humans (i.e., see use of “all” in vv. 8,13-15). Note the shocking affirmation of v. 5b! See the full list of texts that show the inclusion of Gentiles from the very beginning as YHWH’s ultimate purpose in covenant, vv. 10-12 in my notes.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-5

- ¹Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.**
- ²Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.**
- ³Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.**
- ⁴For the word of the LORD is upright,
And all His work is *done* in faithfulness.**
- ⁵He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.**

33:1-5 The first three verses set the mood of the Psalm in praise to God (i.e., five parallel IMPERATIVES).

1. sing for joy in the Lord – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (this same VERB ends Psalm 32)
2. praise – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. sing praises to Him – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. sing to Him – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. play skillfully (BDB 618, KB 668, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) with a shout of joy – BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Verses 4 and 5 give the reasons for praise.

1. YHWH’s word (BDB 182) is upright (BDB 449)
2. all His work is done in faithfulness (BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
3. He loves righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5) and justice (BDB 1048, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6)
4. the earth is full of YHWH’s lovingkindness (BDB 338, cf. Ps. 119:64; see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)

The key to peace and security is the faithful follower’s belief and trust in the unchanging, merciful, gracious character of the covenant-making God (cf. Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8)! The chief character of the Bible is God! It is His story! It is His project and purpose!

33:2 Two stringed instruments are mentioned.

1. lyre (BDB 490) – this had two to four strings. It was widely used in the ANE. This is what David played for King Saul to soothe him (cf. I Sam. 16:16).
2. harp of ten strings (BDB 614 CONSTRUCT BDB 797). It was part of a group of instruments used in both secular and worship settings (cf. I Sam. 10:5).

▣ **“new song”** The peoples of the ANE wrote songs to commemorate major events (cf. Exodus 15; I Samuel 22) and persons. Here the person is YHWH, the Creator (cf. Ps. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:6-12

**⁶By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
⁷He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.
⁸Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
⁹For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.
¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.
¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart from generation to generation.
¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.**

33:6-12 This strophe has two major truths.

1. YHWH is creator, v. 6-9 (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7)
2. YHWH has a purpose for the nations, vv. 10-12 (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction)

33:6 “the word of the LORD” This surely reflects Genesis 1-2 (cf. Psalm 104). I hope you will take a moment and look online at my exegetical commentary on Genesis 1-2 at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

In Hebrew thought, creation was from nothing (*ex nihilo*) by the spoken word (*fiat*, cf. v. 9; Genesis 1; Ps. 148:5; II Cor. 4:6; Heb. 11:3). The word of God is an idiom for the mind or will of God. Modern believers fight over many issues connected to Genesis 1-2. A new book by John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, has been a blessing to me as I have struggled with these issues.

▣ **“heavens”** This refers to the atmosphere above the earth. The ancients saw it as a hard dome of stretched skin with windows for the rain. Remember the Bible is not “anti-scientific” but “pre-scientific.” It describes things with the five human senses, as they appear (i.e., phenomenal language). Be careful of modern western literalism. The Bible is an ancient eastern book! The Bible must be God’s word to its day before it can be God’s word to our day.

If the issue of proper principles for Bible interpretation interests you, see my Bible Interpretation Seminar (video, audio, written text) at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“all their host”** This refers to completed creation of this planet (cf. Gen. 2:1). The ancients saw the heavenly lights (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets) as moving across a dome. They were not gods but just part of YHWH’s beautiful physical creation. I think Genesis 1 functions theologically to depreciate the Babylonian gods as the plagues of Exodus 7-11 function to depreciate the Egyptian gods.

33:7 The subject of “waters” has several aspects.

1. Genesis does not specifically mention God creating water.

2. In ANE mythology salt water and fresh water were gods. YHWH defeats them!
3. Water becomes the means of YHWH's judgment and starting again with Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9).
4. Water was crucial for ANE peoples. They developed fertility worship as a way to ensure the regular cycles of nature (i.e., rain in its season).



NASB, NKJV,

REB "as a heap"

NASB margin "in a water skin"

NRSV "as in a bottle"

NJB "like a dam"

LXX "like a wineskin"

JPSOA "like a mound"

The MT has "heap" (BDB 622, נָהַף, cf. Exod. 15:8; Josh. 3:13,16; Ps. 78:P13). It seems to refer to Gen. 1:9. The UBS Text Project gives it a "B" rating (i.e., some doubt).

The NASB margin, NRSV, LXX take it from a different root, BDB 609 (cf. Josh. 9:4,13; Jdgs. 4:19; Ps. 56:8; 119:83).

There is an Akkadian and Ugaritic root, כָּנָה, which means "jar" or "bottle."

33:8 This verse starts out with two VERBS used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., "let us. . .").

1. let all the earth fear/revere YHWH (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 67:7)
2. let all the inhabitants of the world (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2) stand in awe (BDB 158, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERFECT) of Him

Notice the parallelism. YHWH, not nature, is to be feared. The enemy of biblical faith today in western societies is "naturalism," an agentless, purposeless universe.

33:9 See note at verse 6.

33:10-12 The theological assertions related to physical creation now focus the purpose of that creation, which is fellowship with the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8).

The "nations" (i.e., Gentiles) are not a second thought but YHWH's purpose from the beginning (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Ps. 22:27; 66:1-4; 86:8-10; Isa. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:23; Micah 4:14; Mal. 1:11; John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 10:34-35; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14). See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at Intro. to Psalm 2.

33:10 "the counsel" The "counsel" (BDB 420, i.e., purpose) of the LORD stands forever" (cf. Job 23:13; Pro. 19:21). Amen!

33:12 Does God choose some to salvation or all? This is the difficult question of God's sovereignty versus human free will. See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance at Ps. 25:12.

The love, plan, and purposes of YHWH include, but are larger than, the descendants of Abraham! He wants all to know Him (see lists of Scripture texts above)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:13-17

¹³The LORD looks from heaven;

He sees all the sons of men;

¹⁴From His dwelling place He looks out

**On all the inhabitants of the earth,
¹⁵He who fashions the hearts of them all,
 He who understands all their works.
¹⁶The king is not saved by a mighty army;
 A warrior is not delivered by great strength.
¹⁷A horse is a false hope for victory;
 Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.**

33:13-17 This strophe focuses on YHWH's immanence (cf. Ps. 14:2; 102:19). He knows what is happening on earth in individual lives (cf. Exod. 3:7-9; Matt. 6:25-34; 10:30; Luke 21:18; Acts 27:34; this same imagery is found in several OT texts, i.e., I Sam. 14:45; II Sam. 14:11; I Kgs. 1:52). Faithful followers' lives are not controlled by luck, chance, fate, but are directed by faith, by God! Live boldly for Him!

Notice the number of times "all" (BDB 481) appears in this Psalm, vv. 8a,b, 13b, 14b, 15a,b. YHWH created and takes note of all His human creation! Life is a gift with a purpose. All humans will give an account to God for their stewardship of that gift!

33:15 YHWH fashions (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Gen. 2:7,8,19) all humans and knows their lives (cf. Psalm 139). He is a proper judge because He knows our will, motives, acts, and consequences (see full lists of texts on this subject at Psalm 28:4).

33:16-17 Human events, history, is not haphazard but purposeful. YHWH even uses evil for His purposes. Things do not just happen! Now to be fair, this is a fallen world and all that occurs is not the will of YHWH. He allows our choices to bear fruit (i.e., good or bad). The earth has been affected by mankind's sin (cf. Genesis 3; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 8:18-23). The mystery is how

1. YHWH's sovereignty
2. human choices
3. physical activity mesh

The eyes of faith search for God in all events (cf. vv. 18-22). The wicked search for power, riches, evils, disasters and opportunities for self! Humans should not hope in military power (cf. Psalm 2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:18-22

**¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
 On those who hope for His lovingkindness,
¹⁹To deliver their soul from death
 And to keep them alive in famine.
²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD;
 He is our help and our shield.
²¹For our heart rejoices in Him,
 Because we trust in His holy name.
²²Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,
 According as we have hoped in You.**

33:18-22 Notice how the faithful follower is characterized.

1. those who fear YHWH, v. 18
2. those who hope for His lovingkindness, v. 18

3. those who wait for YHWH, v. 20
4. those who see Him as their help and shield, v. 20
5. those who rejoice in Him, v. 21
6. those who trust in His holy name, v. 21
7. those who hope (lit. 'wait') in Him, v. 22

YHWH will

1. keep His eye on them, vv. 13-15
2. deliver them (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
3. keep them (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
4. help (BDB 740) and protect (BDB 171) them

Notice how at the conclusion of many of the Psalms, the PLURAL is used to widen the prayer/praise from one to all faithful followers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the IMPERATIVES in verses 1-3 that relate to musical worship. Why is music such an important aspect of worship?
2. How do verses 6-9 reflect Genesis 1?
3. Explain verse 11 in your own words.
4. How does verse 15 reflect Gen. 1:26-28?
5. Does YHWH have an "eye"?

PSALM 34

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD A Provider and Deliverer	The Happiness of Those Who Trust in God	Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Trouble (An Acrostic)	In Praise of God's Goodness	In Praise of God's Justice (An Acrostic)
<p><u>MT Intro</u> <i>A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.</i></p>				
34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1 (<i>Aleph</i>) 34:2 (<i>Bet</i>) 34:3 (<i>Gimel</i>)
34:4-7	34:4-7	34:4-10	34:4-7	34:4 (<i>Dalet</i>) 34:5 (<i>He</i>) 34:6 (<i>Zain</i>) 34:7 (<i>Het</i>)
34:8-14	34:8-10 34:11-14	34:11-14	34:8-10 34:11-14	34:8 (<i>Tet</i>) 34:9 (<i>Yod</i>) 34:10 (<i>Kaph</i>) 34:11 (<i>Lamed</i>) 34:12 (<i>Mem</i>) 34:13 (<i>Nun</i>) 34:14 (<i>Samek</i>)
34:15-18	34:15-16 34:17-18	34:15-18	34:15-18	34:15 (<i>Ain</i>) 34:16 (<i>Pe</i>) 34:17 (<i>Zade</i>) 34:18 (<i>Qoph</i>)
34:19-22	34:19-22	34:19-22	34:19-21	34:19 (<i>Resh</i>) 34:20 (<i>Shin</i>) 34:21-22 (<i>Taw</i>)
34:22				

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
 FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an acrostic psalm. Each verse (except v. 5, which has two Hebrew letters) starts with a sequential letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 22 letters.
It is interesting that if an acrostic poem goes beyond 22 letters the next letter is regularly *Pe*.
- B. There are several examples of the acrostic form.
 1. Psalm 9-10 (but not complete, five consonants missing and two reversed)
 2. Psalm 25 (one consonant missing)
 3. Psalm 34 (one verse has two consonants)
 4. Psalm 37 (every two verses starts with sequential letters)
 5. Psalm 111 (two consonants for each verse)
 6. Psalm 112 (two consonants for each verse)
 7. Psalm 119 (eight verses for each sequential consonant)
 8. Psalm 145 (not complete)
- C. Notice that YHWH (i.e., LORD) occurs in almost every verse. The Psalm is about YHWH. Humans know Him by
 1. His acts (cf. Nehemiah 9)
 2. His promises (esp. Genesis 12; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30)
 3. His covenant (Genesis – Deuteronomy)
 4. His Son (John 1:1-14; 14; Col. 1:13-16; Heb. 1:2-3)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-3

**¹I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
²My soul will make its boast in the LORD;
The humble will hear it and rejoice.
³O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.**

34:1-3 This is a strophe of witness. It starts with a SINGULAR COHORTATIVE and ends with a PLURAL. YHWH is too great and wonderful in character and deed not to be praised!

1. I will bless YHWH – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR
2. Let us exalt His name – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* COHORTATIVE, PLURAL

Notice how the praise is characterized.

1. At all times – this is an important reminder that YHWH is to be praised in good or difficult times; He does not change. His mercy is always present! Only our perspective changes. Faith must continue to affirm His presence and praise, cf. I Thess. 5:16-18.
2. Continually (BDB 556, cf. Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 70:4; 71:6) in my mouth – praise should not depend on personal circumstances but should be a normal activity of the recipients of grace.
3. Praise should rise from all people (i.e., humble, lit. “afflicted,” “poor,” or “weak,” BDB 776). All humans have much to praise God for!
4. Together – praise is both individual and corporate (i.e., together, BDB 403), as worship should be. We bring our individual needs to Him as well as our “gathered needs.” Unity and fellowship among faithful followers exhibit praise to God and witness to others!

34:2 “boast” The Hebrew VERB (BDB 237 II, KB 248, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT), in the *Hithpael* means “to boast,” “to exult,” or “to be praised” (cf. I Kgs. 20:11; I Chr. 16:10; Ps. 64:11; 105:3; 106:5; Pro. 20:14; 25:14; 27:1; Isa. 41:16; 45:25; Jer. 9:23).

For the theological concept of “boasting” see Special Topic: Boasting at Ps. 20:7.

34:3 “O magnify the LORD” This VERB (BDB 152, KB 178, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) is a command to express to God our heart’s gratefulness with our praise. Before we succumb to the frailties of life or the difficulties of current situations, we should remind ourselves of

1. who God is
2. what He has done
3. what He is doing

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:4-7

**⁴I sought the LORD, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
⁵They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces will never be ashamed.
⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
And saved him out of all his troubles.
⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him,
And rescues them.**

34:4-7 This strophe develops the thoughts of the first. Notice how it moves from the SINGULAR (i.e., I sought YHWH) to the PLURAL (i.e., they looked to Him), just like the first strophe.

1. For the psalmist, YHWH
 - a. answered him – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. delivered him from all his fears – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. For the group
 - a. YHWH heard, v. 6
 - b. YHWH saved the afflicted
 - c. YHWH’s angel encamped around those who fear Him (cf. Zech. 9:8; YHWH Himself in Ps. 125:2)
 - d. YHWH rescued them

3. The LXX, Syrian, Vulgate versions have “look” and “be radiant” as IMPERATIVES. The MT has PERFECTS in v. 5.

Faithful followers are never alone or isolated. Their faithful God is always present and at the ready!

34:7 “The angel of the LORD” Angels are servants of the redeemed (cf. Num. 20:16; Ps. 91:11; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 3:28; 6:22; Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:11; Heb. 1:14). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

It is obvious that deity manifests Himself physically in human form in the OT. The question for Trinitarians becomes which person of the Trinity fulfills this role. Since God the Father (YHWH) and His Spirit are consistently non-corporeal, it seems possible to suggest that these human manifestations are the pre-incarnate Messiah.

To demonstrate the difficulties one faces in trying to identify a theophany from an angelic encounter the following list is illustrative.

1. the angel of the Lord as an angel
 - a. Gen. 24:7,40
 - b. Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34
 - c. Num. 22:22
 - d. Jdgs. 5:23
 - e. II Sam. 24:16
 - f. I Chr. 21:15-30
 - g. Zech. 1:12-13
2. the angel of the Lord as theophany
 - a. Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-19:1; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exod. 3:2,4; 14:19 (13:21)
 - c. Jdgs. 2:15; 6:22-24; 13:3-23
 - d. Hosea 12:3-4
 - e. Zech. 3:1-5

▣ **“those who fear Him”** This is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (BDB 431, KB 432) which describes faithful followers (cf. Ps. 15:4; 25:12,14; 31:19; 61:5; 66:16; 103:11; 118:4; Deut. 28:58; Neh. 1:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:8-14

⁸O taste and see that the LORD is good;

How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

⁹O fear the LORD, you His saints;

For to those who fear Him there is no want.

¹⁰The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;

But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

¹¹Come, you children, listen to me;

I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹²Who is the man who desires life

And loves *length of days* that he may see good?

¹³Keep your tongue from evil

And your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴Depart from evil and do good;

Seek peace and pursue it.

34:8-14 Because YHWH is “good” (BDB 373 II), His faithful followers (i.e., saints, BDB 872) are admonished to

1. taste – BDB 380, KB 377, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Heb. 6:5
2. see – BDB 406, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (quoted by Peter in I Pet. 2:3 from LXX)
3. take refuge – BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. fear – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5,6. come (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), listen (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to the psalmist teach the fear of YHWH, v. 11

The results of their actions are

1. there is no want, v. 9b; Ps. 23:1
2. they will not be in want of any good thing, v. 10b; Ps. 84:11
3. long life, v. 12

Here are the psalmist’s teachings for a long, happy life.

1. keep your tongue from evil and lips from speaking deceit – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 12:3-4; 15:2-3; 73:8-9; James 3:5-12
2. depart from evil – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:27; Isa. 1:16
3. do good – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:27; Isa. 1:17
4. seek peace – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Mark 9:50; Rom. 14:19; I Cor. 7:15; II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:13; Heb. 12:14; James 3:17-18
5. pursue peace – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. same as #4

Notice the balance between what YHWH does for the faithful follower and what they must do for themselves. There are choices and consequences, both positive and negative (the next strophe is a partial list)!

Peter quotes from this Psalm in I Peter 3.

1. I Pet. 3:10 – Ps. 34:12,13
2. I Pet. 3:11 – Ps. 34:14
3. I Pet. 3:12 – Ps. 34:15-16

He sees it fitting into his emphasis on a united fellowship (i.e., “let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead,” I Pet.3:8-9).

34:8 “the LORD is good” “Good” (BDB 373 II) is a key word in this strophe (cf. I Thess. 5:15).

1. YHWH is good (ADJECTIVE), v. 8, cf. Ps. 25:8; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 145:9; I Chr. 16:34; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7
2. those who seek Him will not be in want of any good thing (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT BDB 375), v. 10, cf. Ps. 84:11
3. fear of YHWH brings a long, good (BDB 373) life, v. 12
4. depart from evil and do good (BDB 373), v. 14
5. notice the use of “good” in Romans 8:28

34:9

NASB, NKJV “saints”
NRSV, NJB “holy ones”
TEV “people”
JPSOA “consecrated ones”
REB “holy people”

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 872) can denote

1. the Messiah, Ps. 16:3 (as David’s ultimate seed)
2. the angels or heavenly counsel, Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 89:5-6,7; Dan. 8:13; Zech. 14:5
3. faithful followers
 - a. priests – Num. 16:5,7; Ps. 106:16 (Aaron)
 - b. Levites – II Chr. 35:3
 - c. prophets – II Kgs. 4:9
 - d. Nazirites – Num. 6:5,8
 - e. Israel – Exod. 19:6; Lev. 11:44,45; 19:7; 20:7,26; 21:6; Num. 15:40; Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19; 28:9

Here it refers to faithful followers.

34:10

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV, NJB “lions”
LXX, Peshitta “rock”
REB “princes”
NEB “unbelievers” (from an Arabic root)

The MT has “lions.” The question is “to whom does the imagery refer?” It seems best to contrast them with “the humbled,” “the afflicted,” or “the poor” (BDB 776) of verses 2 and 6.

34:11 “children” This is literally “sons” (BDB 119). In Wisdom Literature the teacher is called “father” and the students “sons” (i.e., Pro. 1:8; 4:1,10,20; 6:1,20; 24:13,21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:15-18

¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous

And His ears are *open* to their cry.

¹⁶The face of the LORD is against evildoers,

To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷The righteous cry, and the LORD hears

And delivers them out of all their troubles.

¹⁸The LORD is near to the brokenhearted

And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

34:15-18 This strophe shows the results of godly or godless living.

1. godly
 - a. YHWH’s eyes (presence and care) are toward the righteous, v. 15a
 - b. YHWH’s ears hear their cry, vv. 15b,17
 - c. YHWH delivers them out of all their trouble, v. 17b
 - d. YHWH is near to the brokenhearted, v. 18a
 - e. YHWH saves those who are crushed in spirit, v. 18b; Isa. 57:15

2. godless
 - a. YHWH's face is against evildoers, v. 16a
 - b. their memory is cut off (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT), v. 16b; this imagery refers to death

There are several anthropomorphisms in this strophe using the human body to describe YHWH (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6).

1. eyes
2. ears
3. face

34:18 “The LORD is near” What a wonderful promise (cf. Deut. 4:7; Ps. 119:51; 145:18). It is shocking that a holy God wants to fellowship with sinful humans. He seeks us out and pursues us. We were created by Him for fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). No matter how bad things get (i.e., “the brokenhearted,” cf. Ps. 147:3; Isa. 61:1 and “those who are crushed in spirit,” cf. Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15), the Lord is near to faithful followers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:19-22

- ¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.**
- ²⁰He keeps all his bones,
Not one of them is broken.**
- ²¹Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned.**
- ²²The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.**

34:19-22 This strophe continues the emphasis of the previous one, but emphasizing the different outcomes between the godly and godless. The last two strophes are parallelism at a second level.

1. YHWH's actions toward His faithful followers
 - a. He delivers them from all their many afflictions, v. 19
 - b. He keeps all their bones unbroken (i.e., imagery for health), v. 20
 - c. He redeems (see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14) His servants, v. 22a
 - d. none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned, v. 22b
2. YHWH's actions toward the unfaithful
 - a. He shall slay the wicked, v. 21a (cf. v. 16)
 - b. those who hate the righteous will be condemned, v. 21b

34:19 There needs to be two points made about this verse.

1. The righteous did/do/will suffer in this fallen world (cf. Ps. 37:39; 50:15; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17,18-23; II Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-16).
2. God is with them in and through these afflictions. Sometimes He chooses to miraculously deliver but often He does not (see Special Topic at Ps. 30:2). His presence is our greatest need and promise. He knows what we are going through (cf. Exod. 3:7).

34:20 The breaking of a person's bones was an idiom for the judgment of God (cf. Ps. 51:8; Isa. 38:13; Lam. 3:4). Therefore, no bones broken was an idiom of no judgment necessary (i.e., a righteous person).

This verse is quoted in John's Gospel (cf. John 19:36, along with Zech. 12:10 in John 19:37) as a prophetic prediction. I think it is better understood as a typological understanding. Psalm 34:20 is not a prediction about the Messiah's death but about a promise of health and well being to a faithful follower.

Here is the problem, hermeneutical theory asserts that the original intent of the inspired author is the place to begin how to understand a text, in a literary and historical context. This is surely true. But we must allow NT inspired authors the right to use typology. We cannot reproduce their method because we are not inspired, but they were. So, in these cases the NT usage must be valid, but often would have been a surprise to the OT author.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is "the angel of the LORD"? Where else is he mentioned in the Psalms?
2. How and why is verse 8 quoted twice in the NT (Heb. 6:5; I Pet. 2:3)?
3. Why does the author call his hearers "children"?
4. List the parts of the human body used to describe YHWH in verses 15-17.
5. What does the Hebrew idiom "keeps all his bones" mean?
6. What are the implications of verse 19 in a fallen world?
7. What does the word "soul" mean in the OT?

PSALM 35

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Rescue From Enemies	The LORD the Avenger of His People	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer For Help	Prayer of the Virtuous in Persecution
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David."				
35:1-8	35:1-3 35:4-8	35:1-3 35:4-6	35:1-3 35:4-6	35:1-3 35:4 35:5-6
35:9-16	35:9-10 35:11-14	35:9-10 35:11-12 35:13-14	35:9-10 35:11-14	35:7-8 35:9-10 35:11-12 35:13-14
35:17-21	35:15-16 35:17-18 35:19-21	35:15-16 35:17-18 35:19-21	35:15-16 35:17-18 35:19 35:20-25	35:15-16 35:17-18 35:19 35:20-21
35:22-26	35:22-25 35:26	35:22-25 35:26	35:22-25 35:26	35:22-24 35:25-26
35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27 35:28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is dominated by
 - 1. prayer requests (8 IMPERATIVES) for YHWH's help against enemies
 - 2. JUSSIVES (23) describing what the psalmist hopes will happen to those who are
 - a. his enemies
 - b. his supporters
- B. In many of the Psalms it is difficult to identify who the adversaries are. In this Psalm (i.e., vv. 12-14) it is obvious they were close covenant acquaintances. This made the pain of the betrayal all the more intense! However, verses 1-8 seem to imply a military opponent.
- C. Psalm 34 and Psalm 35 are the only Psalms where "the angel of YHWH" is mentioned. This is possibly why they were placed next to each other. The Psalms were selected, edited, and compiled by unknown people in an unknown process. By faith we believe they were led by the Spirit.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:1-8

- ¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.**
- ²Take hold of buckler and shield
And rise up for my help.**
- ³Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me;
Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."**
- ⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;
Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.**
- ⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the LORD driving *them* on.**
- ⁶Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.**
- ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit for my soul.**
- ⁸Let destruction come upon him unawares,
And let the net which he hid catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.**

35:1-8 This strophe starts out with six prayer requests (IMPERATIVES) in verses 1-3.

- 1. contend – BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, the NOUN occurs in the second phrase (BDB 937)
- 2. fight – BDB 535, KB 526, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, the *Qal* PARTICIPLE occurs in the second phrase
- 3. take hold – BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (lit. "seize")
- 4. rise up – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5. draw out – BDB 937, KB 1227, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Exod. 15:9
- 6. MT has "close up" – BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (NKJV, LXX, NIV) but the same consonants can mean "battle axes" (Herodotus, NASB, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA). The UBS Text

Project gives the IMPERATIVE an “A” rating. The Hebrew consonants can be translated “battle axe,” “javelin,” “pike”; it is found only here in the OT. One wonders who the psalmist is referring to as his adversaries.

1. military combatants, vv. 1-3, 4-6
2. legal foes, v. 11
3. close friends, vv. 12-14
7. say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. Notice how personal this phrase is. The psalmist wants YHWH to affirm that He is his only deliverance, cf. Ps. 62:2; 89:26. If there is to be salvation/deliverance, it will come from the covenant God, YHWH!

▣ Beginning at verses 4-8 the psalmist asks YHWH to

1. let those be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4; Ps. 40:14; 70:2; 83:17
2. let those be dishonored – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
3. let those be turned back – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
4. let those be humiliated – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
5. let them be like chaff before the wind – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 5; Job 21:18; Ps. 1:4
6. let their way be dark and slippery – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE, v. 6
7. let destruction come upon him unawares – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8
8. let the net which he hid catch himself – BDB 539, KB 530, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8 (typical biblical role reversal; cf. Ps. 9:15; 31:4; 140:5; 142:3)
9. let him fall on him by means of his own evil plans – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8

▣ These enemies are characterized as

1. who seek my life – BDB 134, KB 153, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, v. 4
2. who devise evil against me – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, v. 4
3. who without cause they hid their net for me – BDB 380, KB 377, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 7
4. who without cause they dug a pit for my soul – BDB 343, KB 340, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 7 (notice this is repeated for emphasis)

35:2 “buckler and shield” These (BDB 857, KB 1037 and BDB 171, KB 545) were types of shields. BDB identifies “buckler” (BDB 857) as a large, full body shield but does not give the size of the other one. It is assumed that both were carried into battle by soldiers (and/or their armor bearers). Therefore, one was for spears and arrows (full body) and one for hand to hand fighting (smaller, BDB171; NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 846).

35:3 “pursue me” This term (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is often used in the Psalms of aggressive adversaries (cf. Ps. 7:1,5; 31:15; 71:11; 109:16; 119:84,86). It can be

1. a military pursuit
2. a hunting pursuit
3. a metaphor of aggressive opposition

35:5-6 “the angel of the LORD” The angels were agents of protection in Ps. 34:7, but here agents of judgment. Some would say the Bible, being an ancient, pre-scientific book, is superstitious about the unseen, unexplained. It is surely true that there is mystery here, but if one holds to the Bible being the unique revelation of the one true God, then he/she must accept its worldview, which includes the

interconnection between the visible and invisible world. Exactly how, when, where, who is connected to this interconnection is uncertain.

It is often difficult to know the difference between the literary use (use for effect) and literal use (i.e., angelic intervention or activity). There are two cliches here—everything has an angelic component versus nothing has an angelic component. We live by faith and biblical revelation. Differing personalities migrate to one side or the other.

Life is often “dark” and “slippery” (cf. Ps. 73:18), but for those who trust YHWH, He walks through the valley(s) of deep darkness with them (cf. Ps. 23:4; 107:14). Life is often described in the figurative language of a walk or a journey. A straight, level, smooth road is imagery of a good life, while dark, slippery obstacles in the road or an unlevel road is imagery of a problem.

See Special Topic: The Angel of the Lord at Ps. 34:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:9-16

⁹And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD;

It shall exult in His salvation.

¹⁰All my bones will say, “LORD, who is like You,

Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him,

And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?”

¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up;

They ask me of things that I do not know.

¹²They repay me evil for good,

To the bereavement of my soul.

¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;

I humbled my soul with fasting,

And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

¹⁴I went about as though it were my friend or brother;

I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;

The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,

They slandered me without ceasing.

¹⁶Like godless jesters at a feast,

They gnashed at me with their teeth.

35:9-16 This strophe affirms YHWH’s deliverance.

1. my soul shall rejoice in the Lord – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. it shall exult in His salvation – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. all his bones (i.e., his soul, cf. Ps. 51:8) will say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., the terms “soul,” *nephesh* [BDB 659], and “bones” are idioms for the whole person, cf. Ps. 6:2)
 - a. who is like You, cf. Exod. 15:11; Ps. 86:8, Micah 7:18; see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7
 - b. who delivers the afflicted

At this point (v. 11) the psalmist begins to describe his adversaries.

1. malicious witnesses – BDB 729 CONSTRUCT BDB 329, v. 11
2. who asks him things he does not know, v. 11 (the setting is a court scene and the false witnesses are asking about things the psalmist did not do)

3. who repay evil for good, v. 12, cf. Ps. 38:20; 109:5 (reversal, cf. vv. 13-14)
4. who rejoiced at his stumbling, v. 15
5. who gathered together to slander him, v. 15
6. who gnashed their teeth at him, v. 15, cf. Ps. 37:12; 112:10; Job 16:9; Lam. 2:16; Matt. 8:12; 25:30; Luke 13:28

In verses 14 and 15 the psalmist describes what he did for those who persecuted him

1. when they were sick, he wore sackcloth on their behalf (see Special Topic: Grieving Rites at Ps. 30:11)
2. he humbled himself, fasted, and prayed on their behalf
3. he mourned for them (as for a close friend or brother)
4. he mourned for them (as for his own mother)

There is a visible contrast between how the faithful follower acts and the faithless ones act! Our relationship with God is clearly seen in how we treat others.

35:12b The MT has “bereavement” (BDB 1013) from loss of children which is a terrible sorrow. The NEB suggests an emendation, “they seek for my life”; REB, “lying in wait to take my life.”

As is so often true, modern readers do not fully understand the poetry of an ANE culture. However, though there are rare words and uncertain imagery, the overall thrust is understandable from context, especially parallelism.

35:13b

NASB, LXX	“and my prayer kept returning to my bosom”
JPSOA	“may what I prayed for happen to me”
NRSV, TEV	“I prayed with a bowed head on my bosom”
NJB	“praying ever anew in my heart”

The MT is uncertain. So the translations suggest

1. the psalmist’s prayers and actions for his enemies in vv. 13-14 return to his benefit, not theirs (cf. Matt. 10:13; Luke 10:6)
2. the phrase refers to his body’s position in prayer
3. the phrase refers to repeated prayer

35:15

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB, JPSOA,	
REB	“stumbling”
NKJV, TEV	“adversity”
NEB	“ruffians”

The MT has “at my stumbling” (BDB 854, cf. Ps. 38:17; Job 18:12). The UBS Text Project gives the MT a “C” rating (considerable doubt). It suggests “limping ones,” denoting a hurt psalmist (p. 220). The UBS *Handbook* (p. 335) suggests the psalmist was limping like a wounded animal. If so the “gathered together” could be like a pack of dogs.

35:16

NASB	“like godless jesters at a feast”
NKJV	“with ungodly mockers at feasts”
NRSV	“they impiously mock more and more”
TEV	“like those who would mock a cripple”
NJB	“if I fall they surround me”

REB “when I slipped, they mocked at me”
JPSOA “with impious, mocking grimace”

The MT has “like the profanest of mockers of a cake,” which obviously does not make sense. So English translations have tried to find a parallel between verse 15 and verse 16, but it is all conjecture. The AB (p. 214) suggests an emendation that results in “my encircling mockers.”

The MT is not the first or oldest Hebrew manuscript.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:17-21

¹⁷**LORD, how long will You look on?**

Rescue my soul from their ravages,

My only *life* from the lions.

¹⁸**I will give You thanks in the great congregation;**

I will praise You among a mighty throng.

¹⁹**Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me;**

Nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously.

²⁰**For they do not speak peace,**

But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.

²¹**They opened their mouth wide against me;**

They said, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!”

35:17-21 Unlike the previous strophe, this one starts out asking YHWH why and then a prayer for action.

1. how long with You not act – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT (same sentiment as Ps. 13:1-2; 22:1-2; Hab. 1:2-4; YHWH does not respond as the psalmist thinks He should)
2. rescue (lit. “bring back”) my soul – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Verse 18 describes what the psalmist will do if YHWH rescues him.

1. I will give You thanks in the great congregation (temple gathering, cf. Ps. 22:25; 40:9,10) – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will praise You among the mighty throng (synonymous parallelism with #1) – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

Verse 19 returns to the “let those. . .” pattern of vv. 5-8.

1. do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. neither let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously – BDB 902, KB 1147, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Pro. 6:12-14; 10:10

Verses 20-21 give the reasons why YHWH should act against his adversaries.

1. they do not speak peace
2. they devise deceitful words
3. they opened their mouth wide against me
4. they say, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it”

35:14 Jesus quotes part of this verse in John 15:25 as referring to Him in a typological sense.

35:17 “lions” See note at Psalm 34:10.

35:20 “those who are quiet in the land” This phrase is unique. From its parallel it seems to refer to people who do not cause trouble but seek peace.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:22-26

²²You have seen it, O LORD, do not keep silent;

O LORD, do not be far from me.

²³Stir up Yourself, and awake to my right

And to my cause, my God and my LORD.

²⁴Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness,

And do not let them rejoice over me.

²⁵Do not let them say in their heart, “Aha, our desire!”

Do not let them say, “We have swallowed him up!”

²⁶Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress;

Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me.

35:22-26 The psalmist appeals to YHWH’s knowledge of the situation (cf. Ps. 10:14; 32:8; 33:18; 34:15; Exod. 3:7). In light of His knowledge of the enemies’ attack, please

1. do not keep silent – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 28:1; 39:12; 83:1; 109:1; also note Hab. 1:13
2. do not be far from me – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 10:1; 22:11; 38:21; 71:12

These JUSSIVES are followed by three specific prayer requests (IMPERATIVES) for court justice (i.e., “right,” “cause”).

1. stir up Yourself – BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:6; 44:23; 59:4; 80:2
2. awake – BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. judge – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 26:1; 43:1; 139:1,23; notice the judgment is “according to Your righteousness” (cf. 31:1c; Romans 4-6; Galatians 3)

In the following verses (vv. 24b-26) there is another series of six *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. do not let them rejoice over me – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
2. do not let them say in their hearts, “Aha, our desire!” – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 25
3. do not let them say, “We have swallowed him up!” – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 25
4. let them be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26
5. let them be humiliated – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26
6. let those be clothed with shame and dishonor – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:27-28

²⁷Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication;

**And let them say continually, “The LORD be magnified,
Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.”**

²⁸And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness

And Your praise all day long.

35:27-28 Again there is a series of four *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. let them who favor my vindication (cf. v. 24a) shout for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
2. let them rejoice (parallel to #1) – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
3. let them say continuously – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
4. let the Lord be magnified – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27

35:28 The tongue of the faithless spreads lies, rumors, and bitterness but the tongue of the faithful follower tells of

1. the righteousness of YHWH, cf. Ps. 51:14; 71:15,24
2. His praise

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does this Psalm use the imagery of YHWH as warrior?
2. List the things that the psalmist asks YHWH to do to his enemies in verses 4-8 and again in verses 24b-26.
3. What doctrine does the phrase “who is like You” (v. 10) imply?
4. Why does the psalmist feel betrayed by his acquaintances? (cf. vv. 13-14)
5. What do the words, “Aha, aha” (cf. vv. 21,25) imply?
6. List the good things the psalmist asks for his supporters in v. 27.

PSALM 36

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Wickedness of Men and Lovingkindness of God	Man's Wickedness and God's Perfection	A Psalm of Mixed Type	Human Wickedness	The Perversity of Sinners and the Benevolence of God
<p><u>MT Intro</u> "For the Choir Director. A <i>Psalm</i> of David the Servant of the LORD"</p>				
36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1 36:2-3a 36:3b-6a
36:5-9	36:5-9	36:5-6 36:7-9	36:5-6 36:7-9	36:6c-7 36:8-9
36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-11 36:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm describes the ungodly person in vv. 1-4 and then the faithful follower in vv. 7-9.
- B. YHWH is described in vv. 5-6 by four powerful descriptive NOUNS.
1. lovingkindness
 2. faithfulness
 3. righteousness
 4. judgments/justice
- They describe YHWH and His covenant. These are how He wants His world to function!
- C. Verses 10-12 offer concluding prayers for YHWH to help shield the godly from the influences of the godless. The downward pull of a
1. fallen world (cf. Eph. 2:1)
 2. fallen culture
 3. fallen acquaintances (cf. I Cor. 15:33)
 4. fallen self (cf. Eph. 2:3)
 5. Eph. 4:2 would also add Satan (i.e., the prince of the power of the air) is often so strong, consistent, and pervasive. YHWH's character, word, and intervention are our only hope.
- D. Two unique word usages are found in this Psalm.
1. evil personified (i.e., "transgression speaks"), v. 1
 2. "house" refers to all creation or eschatological setting. See note at vv. 8-9.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:1-4

- ¹Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart;
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- ²For it flatters him in his *own* eyes
Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*.
- ³The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit;
He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.
- ⁴He plans wickedness upon his bed;
He sets himself on a path that is not good;
He does not despise evil.

36:1-4 These verses describe the ungodly (BDB 957).

1. Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his (LXX, MT, "my") heart (BDB 833 calls this "personified as evil spirit"). The VERB of transgression/rebellion is used in Ps. 37:38; 51:13; Isa. 43:27; 59:13; 66:24; Jer. 2:8,29; 3:13; 33:8, where it refers to transgression/rebellion among the covenant people. The psalmist lives among a people of unclean lips (cf. Isa. 6:5,9-10).
2. There is no fear (i.e., terror, BDB 808) of God before their eyes. Fear of YHWH is admonished in Ps. 34:9; 55:19d. This verse is the concluding text quoted in the list of OT texts which assert the universal sinfulness of all mankind in Rom. 3:18.

3. Either “personified transgression” or the godless person himself lies (“smooth talk,” BDB 325, KB 322, *Hiphil* PERFECT) to himself about his own iniquity.
4. The words of his mouth (which reflects who he is) are
 - a. wickedness (BDB 19)
 - b. deceit (BDB 941)
5. He has ceased to
 - a. be wise (BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. do good (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
6. He plans wickedness upon his bed (all the VERBS of v. 4 are IMPERFECTS, denoting ongoing action), cf. Pro. 4:16; Micah 2:1.
7. He set himself on a path that is not good. Remember life is characterized as a path, road, way. Each of us must choose which path, cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Matt. 7:13-14.
8. He does not despise evil.

Even covenant people are tested/tempted (i.e., personified rebellion) but they are still responsible for their choices and the consequences of those choices!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:5-9

**⁵Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness *reaches* to the skies.**

**⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are *like* a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.**

**⁷How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.**

**⁸They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.**

**⁹For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.**

36:5-9 This strophe describes YHWH’s character and actions toward His people. As the rebel chose and lived in light of his/her choices, so too, the faithful followers must continue to respond to YHWH’s love.

1. YHWH is described as, vv. 5-6
 - a. lovingkindness (BDB 338, i.e., covenant loyalty, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - b. faithfulness (BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
 - c. righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
 - d. judgments (BDB 1048, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6)

These are four powerful, recurrent attributes of YHWH. They characterize His dealings with humans. In light of these attributes humans and all life on this planet is preserved (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECTS). *Elohim* created and sustains this planet, its people, its animals, and its plant life (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1).
2. Faithful followers
 - a. take refuge in the shadow of Your wings (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)
 - b. drink their fill of the abundance of Your house (see Contextual Insights, D or note at v. 8)
 - c. have Your house as
 - (1) the fountain of life, cf. Jer. 2:13; 17:13
 - (2) light (i.e., truth, health, joy, cf. 18:28; 27:1)

36:7 “O God! And the children of men” It is possible that “God” (*Elohim*) here should/could refer to “leaders,” because it seems to parallel “man and beasts” (i.e., a category of two) in v. 6c. If so, then the two categories of humans referred to must be

1. leaders (i.e., judges in Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6 or leaders in Ps. 29:1; 58:1)
2. those led

NEB, REB, TEV, and AB footnote have “Gods and men.”

36:8 “Your house” In this context it does not refer to the temple but a recreated Eden (i.e., “delight,” BDB 726, v. 8b) or eschatological setting (i.e., new age, cf. Ps. 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Rev. 22:1-2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:10-12

¹⁰O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,

And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

¹¹Let not the foot of pride come upon me,

And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

¹²There the doers of iniquity have fallen;

They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

36:10-12 This concluding strophe is a prayer by the psalmist to YHWH on behalf of the faithful followers (i.e., “to those who know You,” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6).

1. Continue – BDB 604, KB 645, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. in Your lovingkindness
 - b. in Your righteousness
2. Do not let
 - a. the foot of pride come upon me – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. the hand of the wicked drive me away – BDB 626, KB 678, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. Let the wicked be
 - a. fallen – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. thrust down – BDB 190, KB 218, *Qal* PERFECT
 - c. unable to rise – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* PERFECT (all three VERBS may refer to death and descent into *Sheol*)

Note the consequences of faith (vv. 7-8) and evil (vv. 11-12). Choices have consequences!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Compare all the translations that you have and note the different ways they translate verse 1.
2. Express in your own words the essence of verses 1-4 in one declarative sentence.
3. What do the four significant terms in vv. 5,6 have to say about the concept of conditional and unconditional covenants in the OT?
4. Can the term *Elohim* in verse 7 refer to the judges or leaders of Israel as well as the God of Israel? Why?
5. Why does the term “in the shadow of Your wings” refer to God as a female? What is the implication of these types of statements?
6. Does it seem unspiritual to you that David prays for the destruction of his enemies?

PSALM 37

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Security of Those Who Trust in the LORD, and Insecurity of the Wicked	The Heritage of the Righteous and the Calamity of the Wicked	The Certainty of Retribution For the Wicked (A Wisdom Psalm)	The Destiny of the Wicked and of the Good	The Fate of the Upright and the Wicked (An Acrostic)
<u>MT Intro</u> <i>A Psalm of David</i>				
37:1-6	37:1-2	37:1-2	3:1-2	37:1-2 (<i>Aleph</i>)
	37:3-4	37:3-4	37:3-4	37:3-4 (<i>Bet</i>)
	37:5-6	37:5-6	37:5-6	37:5-6 (<i>Gimel</i>)
37:7-11	37:7-11	37:7	37:7	37:7 (<i>Dalet</i>)
		37:8-9	37:8-9	37:8-9 (<i>He</i>)
		37:10-11	37:10-11	37:10-11 (<i>Waw</i>)
37:12-15	37:12-15	37:12-13	37:12-13	37:12-13 (<i>Zain</i>)
		37:14-15	37:14-15	37:14-15 (<i>Het</i>)
37:16-22	37:16-17	37:16-17	37:16-17	37:16-17 (<i>Tet</i>)
	37:18-20	37:18-19	37:18-20	37:18-19 (<i>Yod</i>)
		37:20		37:20 (<i>Kaph</i>)
	37:21-22	37:21-22	37:21-22	37:21-22 (<i>Lamed</i>)
37:23-26	37:23-24	37:23-24	37:23-24	37:23-24 (<i>Mem</i>)
	37:25-26	37:25-26	37:25-26	37:25-26 (<i>Nun</i>)
37:27-34	37:27-29	37:27-29	37:27-29	37:27-28b (<i>Samek</i>)
				37:28c-29 (<i>Ain</i>)
	37:30-31	37:30-31	37:30-31	37:30-31 (<i>Pe</i>)
	37:32-33	37:32-33	37:32-33	37:32-33 (<i>Zade</i>)
	37:34-36	37:34	37:34	37:34 (<i>Qoph</i>)
		37:35-36	37:35-36	37:35-36 (<i>Resh</i>)
37:35-40				
	37:37-38	37:37-38	37:37-38	37:37-38 (<i>Shim</i>)
	37:39-40	37:39-40	37:39-40	37:39-40 (<i>Taw</i>)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm swings back and forth between admonishing and describing the faithful followers and describing the faithless. The theological issue is the prosperity of the wicked (cf. Psalm 73; Habakkuk).
- B. YHWH is characterized in several different ways. He sustains the faithful and destroys the faithless.
- C. This is an acrostic psalm. Each suggestive letter has two verses (i.e., 4 lines) except *Qoph*, v. 34, which has 3 lines.
- D. This Psalm's theology about inheriting the land (i.e., Canaan) and prosperity is based on Gen. 12:1-3 (YHWH's initial call and promises to Abraham), which develops under Moses into the Mosaic covenant. It had blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30 for a good summary).

YHWH wanted to reveal Himself to the world through His special covenant people, Israel. Israel was to reveal His grace, mercy, and love through its prosperity and godly culture. As is obvious from the historical books (i.e., Joshua – II Kings), the disobedience of Israel thwarted this purpose. Israel was judged and the covenant broken (i.e., exile). Therefore, YHWH was forced to start a "new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) based on His grace and actions, not fallen human obedience (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ recorded in the NT). With this new covenant the promises to national Israel were annulled! Below I have placed a Special Topic that tries to document this change.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY ARE THE END-TIME EVENTS SO CONTROVERSIAL?

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world.

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Revelation 21-22).

4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet. 2:5, 9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The “if. . .then” pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one “horn of the dilemma,” God’s faithfulness or human effort, God’s sovereignty or mankind’s free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God’s OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God’s ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God’s covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models)

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture’s literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters’ arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible’s eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation’s initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God’s control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God’s love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark. 13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and

dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the

Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary on Revelation with some fear and trepidation, not because of the curse of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God's people. I love God's revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a "what if," not a "thus says the Lord." I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding "word" is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:1-6

- ¹**Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.**
- ²**For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.**
- ³**Trust in the LORD and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.**
- ⁴**Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.**
- ⁵**Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.**
- ⁶**He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.**

37:1-6 This strophe has seven IMPERATIVES and three JUSSIVES. These are not prayers but admonitions to the faithful (i.e., what to do and what not to do).

1. fret not yourself – BDB 354, KB 351, *Hithpael* JUSSIVE, same form in vv. 7,8; note Pro. 24:19; the word means “burn,” or “be kindled” and is used figuratively of anger; here it is paired with “envy” (BDB 888)
2. do not be envious – BDB 888, KB 1109, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 73:3; Pro. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19

The lives of the wicked look successful and happy but they are short lived; they will not ultimately inherit the promised land.

1. they will wither quickly like the grass – BDB 576, KB 593, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 14:2; Ps. 90:5-6; 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-8
2. they will fade like the green herb – BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* IMPERFECT

In light of the transitoriness of the faithless ones, faithful followers should (vv. 3-5 have 7 IMPERATIVES)

1. trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 3,5; Ps. 52:8; 62:8; Pro. 3:5-6
2. do good – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. dwell in the land – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. cultivate faithfulness – BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. delight yourself in YHWH – BDB 772, KB 851, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE (i.e., not in physical prosperity)
6. commit your way (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2) to YHWH – BDB 164, KB 193, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. trust in Him – BDB same as #1

YHWH will

1. give (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT) the faithful follower “the desires of your heart,” v. 4
2. “He will do it” (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT), v. 5
3. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
4. He will bring forth your justice as the noonday (#3 and 4 are parallel and seem to refer to a court case or is figurative of end-time judgment)

37:4b This line of poetry has always meant a lot to me personally, but I am not sure I have interpreted it correctly. I usually use this to assert that if we are faithful followers we will desire the right things because

YHWH has informed our hearts (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27). But it surely could refer to the answered prayers of the faithful follower (cf. Ps. 20:4-5; 21:2; 145:19; Matt. 7:7-8). The theological issue is the interplay between God's sovereignty and human freewill (see Special Topic at Ps. 25:12; NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 444). Sometimes careful exegesis ruins a good sermon!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:7-11

- ⁷Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.**
- ⁸Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing.**
- ⁹For evildoers will be cut off,
But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.**
- ¹⁰Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*.**
- ¹¹But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.**

37:7-11 This is a continuation of the previous strophe.

1. admonitions to the faithful
 - a. rest in YHWH – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. wait patiently for Him – BDB 296, KB 297, *Hithpolel* IMPERATIVE (i.e., for YHWH to act temporally and eschatologically)
 - c. fret not – same as v. v. 1
 - d. cease from anger – BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., do not try to avenge yourself)
 - e. forsake wrath – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - f. fret not – same as vv. 1,7
2. because the fate of the faithless is sure
 - a. his prosperity will be cut off (i.e., death)
 - b. the wicked will have no place (like wild flowers out of season)
3. therefore, the faithful (i.e., those who wait for YHWH, v. 9b)
 - a. will inherit the land, cf. vv. 9,11,22,29,34, see note D. in Contextual Insights; and Special Topic at Ps. 1:2)
 - b. will delight themselves in abundant prosperity

37:7 “wait patiently” The MT has the VERB (BDB 296 I, KB 297), literally “whirl,” “dance,” “writhe” (i.e., in pain). It is used in the sense of “waiting” in Job 35:14 (*Polel*). Only here in Ps. 37:7 (*Hithpolel*) does it mean “wait patiently.” Because of this the NET Bible (cf. p. 895, #9) has suggested an emendation to a different Hebrew root (i.e., from ליהל to להיל, BDB 403, *Hiphil*).

37:8 Here again is the recurrent OT emphasis of God's sovereignty and foreknowledge (cf. v. 23). All history is present before Him. Faithful followers can trust that

1. the past is forgiveness
2. the present is empowered
3. the future is secure

37:10 “Yet a little while” This is Hebrew imagery for predestined occurrences. YHWH is in control of time. There is a plan, purpose, and just outcome. Righteousness will be victorious in the end and wickedness will be exposed, judged, and eliminated (cf. v. 13)!

37:11 “the humble will inherit the land” This is quoted by Jesus in the beatitude of Matt. 5:5 (LXX), where “land” has turned into “earth” (see Contextual Insights).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:12-15

¹²**The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.**

¹³**The LORD laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.**

¹⁴**The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.**

¹⁵**Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.**

37:12-15 The wicked’s actions against the faithful and YHWH’s response.

1. the wicked
 - a. plot against the righteous
 - b. gnash (their teeth) at him/them, cf. Job 16:9; Ps. 35:11; Lam. 2:16; Acts 7:54
 - c. have drawn the swords
 - d. have bent their bows
 - (1) to cast down the afflicted
 - (2) to cast down the needy
 - (3) to slay the upright
2. YHWH’s response
 - a. He laughs at him/them, cf. Ps. 2:4; 59:9
 - b. He sees his/their day (i.e., of judgment) coming, both temporal and eschatological
 - c. their sword will be broken (reversal by YHWH)
 - d. their bow will be broken (reversal by YHWH)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:16-22

¹⁶**Better is the little of the righteous
Than the abundance of many wicked.**

¹⁷**For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the LORD sustains the righteous.**

¹⁸**The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
And their inheritance will be forever.**

¹⁹**They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,
And in the days of famine they will have abundance.**

²⁰**But the wicked will perish;
And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,
They vanish— like smoke they vanish away.**

**²¹The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives.
²²For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.**

37:16-22 This strophe is a series of contrasts (antithetical parallelism).

1. Verse 16
 - a. better is the little of the righteous (cf. Pro. 15:16-17; 16:8; 28:6; this is the theological balance to v. 25)
 - b. than the abundance of many wicked (i.e., do not fret over the seeming prosperity of the wicked, vv. 1-2)
2. Verse 17
 - a. the arms of the wicked will be broken
 - b. YHWH sustains the righteous
3. Verses 18-20
 - a. the blameless, vv. 18-19
 - (1) YHWH knows their day
 - (2) their inheritance will be forever
 - (3) they will not be ashamed in the time of evil
 - (4) in the days of famine, they will have abundance
 - b. the wicked
 - (1) will perish
 - (2) will vanish away (MT uncertain, context suggests, like spring flowers, cf. v. 2)
4. Verse 21
 - a. the wicked borrows and does not pay back
 - b. the righteous is gracious and gives
5. Verse 22
 - a. those blessed by YHWH will inherit the land
 - b. those cursed by YHWH will be cut off

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:23-26

**²³The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.
²⁴When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.
²⁵I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.
²⁶All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.**

37:23-26 This strophe describes the faithful follower(s).

1. his/her steps are established by YHWH
2. YHWH delights in his/her way
3. when he/she falls
 - a. not hurled headlong (i.e., figurative of destruction)

- b. because YHWH holds his/her hand (saints do falter from time to time but YHWH does not)
- 4. psalmist (with the experiences of a lifetime) has never seen the righteous forsaken
- 5. psalmist has never seen their descendants begging bread
- 6. he/she is gracious and lends
- 7. his/her descendants are a blessing

37:25 This is an OT perspective based on the Mosaic covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). This is not meant to be interpreted today that all poor and needy people can not be believers. The covenants have changed, see Contextual Insights D. For a good brief discussion of this verse, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 267-268.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:27-34

- ²⁷Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.**
- ²⁸For the LORD loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.**
- ²⁹The righteous will inherit the land
And dwell in it forever.**
- ³⁰The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice.**
- ³¹The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip.**
- ³²The wicked spies upon the righteous
And seeks to kill him.**
- ³³The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.**
- ³⁴Wait for the LORD and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.**

37:27-34 This strophe, like vv. 1-6, has several IMPERATIVES (6) admonishing the faithful. This is another strophe describing the actions of the faithful followers.

- 1. admonishments (i.e., IMPERATIVES)
 - a. depart from evil, v. 27 – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. do good, v. 27 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 3
 - c. dwell forever, v. 27 – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 18,29
 - d. wait for YHWH, v. 34 – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 9
 - e. keep His way, v. 34 – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. reasons for the admonishments
 - a. YHWH loves justice
 - b. YHWH does not forsake His godly ones
 - c. they are preserved forever
 - d. they will inherit the land

- e. they will dwell in the land forever
- f. they speak wisdom/justice
- g. they/he have the law of God in their/his hearts
- h. his foot does not slip
- i. YHWH will not desert him/them
- j. he/they will not be condemned in judgment

Being a covenant believer changes every aspect of one's life, motives, and hopes. There is a radical difference between the faithful follower and the faithless person. The faithless person may be

- 1. an idolater
- 2. a disobedient covenant person
- 3. a practical atheist
- 4. an apathetic follower
- 5. an aggressive rich person
- 6. a disloyal political person

In verse 32 he/she is described as one who (see strophe 35-40)

- 1. spies upon the righteous
- 2. seeks to kill him/them

37:28 “They are preserved forever” The LXX changes this to “the evildoers will be chased away.” This is suggested to preserve the acrostic structure (i.e., *ayin*) and fit the parallelism. The UBS Text Project gives the MT a “B” rating (some doubt).

- 1. MT – וְדָמְשָׁן
- 2. LXX – וְדָשָׁן (NEB, NJB, REB)

37:31 “The law of God” This term (BDB 435) is one of several terms used to describe YHWH's revelation to Israel (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2).

☐ **“in his heart”** This is the internalization of God's revelation (i.e., God's Law written on the heart) and is a marker of the “new covenant” of Jer. 31:31-34.

☐ **“His steps do not slip”** Godly living is figuratively described as a straight, level, unobstructed path, a clearly marked road (cf. v. 34a, “His way,” see note at Ps. 1:1). The opposite would be

- 1. steps slipped
- 2. in the miry clay
- 3. stumbled over

In the NT this same imagery is found (i.e., “walk,” cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:35-40

- ³⁵I have seen a wicked, violent man
Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.**
- ³⁶Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;
I sought for him, but he could not be found.**
- ³⁷Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;
For the man of peace will have a posterity.**
- ³⁸But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;
The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.**
- ³⁹But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;**

He is their strength in time of trouble.

⁴⁰The LORD helps them and delivers them;

He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,

Because they take refuge in Him.

37:35-40 This strophe summarizes the contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

1. the wicked
 - a. violent (lit. “terror-striking,” BDB 792)
 - b. spreading (rapidly, BDB 947) his influencing power and control like a luxuriant tree in the land (MT uncertain)
 - c. his days are numbered and he will be no more
 - d. he/they will be destroyed along with their descendants (see note below at #2 c.)
2. the righteous
 - a. mark (lit. “keep watch”) the blameless man (see Special Topic at Ps. 18:20-24) – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. behold the upright – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - c. the man of peace will have a posterity (either afterlife or children)
 - d. they are saved by YHWH
 - e. YHWH is their strength in time of trouble
 - f. YHWH helps them
 - g. YHWH delivers them

All of this occurs because they take refuge in Him

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm related to Psalms 49 and 73, and the book of Job?
2. Why are men described in terms of grass and flowers?
3. What is the etymology of the term “trust” and what is the significance for our lives?
4. What is the central theme of this Psalm?
5. Why are verses 16 and 24 such an important balance to traditional OT wisdom?
6. Does this Psalm teach temporal or eschatological judgment? Why?

PSALM 38

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer of a Suffering Penitent	Prayer In Time of Chastening	Prayer For Healing in Sickness (A Lament)	The Prayer of a Sufferer	Prayer in Distress
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David for a memorial"				
38:1-8	38:1-2 38:3-5 38:6-8	38:1-2 38:3-4 38:5-6 38:7-8	38:1-2 38:3-4 38:5-8	38:1-3 38:4-6 38:7-8
38:9-12	38:9-10 38:11-12	38:9-11 38:12	38:9-12	38:9-10 38:11-12
38:13-22	38:13-14 38:15-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-16 38:17-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-17 38:18-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-16 38:17-18 38:19-20 38:21-22

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm has much in common with Psalms 32 and 51.
- B. In Jewish thought sin and sickness were related. Confession of sin brought answered prayer and restoration of mind, spirit, and body.
When one looks at all the physical problems mentioned, there are too many to be characteristic of one disease. Probably they are figurative (cf. Isa. 1:5-6). If so, the focus of the Psalm is not physical healing but forgiveness of sin!
- C. As in so many Psalms the connection between
1. the physical problems
 2. the attack of enemies
 3. the rejection of friends
- is uncertain. They are all related but how is a mystery. Are they literal or figurative of sin's social consequences?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:1-8

- ¹**O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath,
And chasten me not in Your burning anger.**
- ²**For Your arrows have sunk deep into me,
And Your hand has pressed down on me.**
- ³**There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation;
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.**
- ⁴**For my iniquities are gone over my head;
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.**
- ⁵**My wounds grow foul *and* fester
Because of my folly.**
- ⁶**I am bent over and greatly bowed down;
I go mourning all day long.**
- ⁷**For my loins are filled with burning,
And there is no soundness in my flesh.**
- ⁸**I am benumbed and badly crushed;
I groan because of the agitation of my heart.**

38:1-8 Most other English translations have this section broken down into several strophes. Strophe division is not a textual issue. It is speculation not inspiration.

The psalmist describes his condition and feelings.

1. he senses YHWH's displeasure
 - a. do not rebuke me in Your wrath – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 6:1
 - b. do not chasten me in Your burning anger – BDB 415, KB 418, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; this VERB often is used of covenant violations (cf. Lev. 26:18,28; Ps. 6:1; 39:11; 94:10; 118:18; Hos. 10:10)

2. he feels YHWH's punishment
 - a. Your arrows have sunk deep into me, cf. Deut. 32:23; Job 6:4; Ps. 7:12-13; 45:5
 - b. Your hand has pressed me down, cf. Ps. 32:4; 39:10 (note same VERB in both lines but used in different senses, BDB 639, KB 692)
3. the physical result of YHWH's displeasure (because of sin, vv. 3b,4,5b)
 - a. no soundness (BDB 1022, *shalom*) in my flesh
 - b. no health in my bones
 - c. wounds (lit. "stripes," BDB 289) grow foul (BDB 92, KB 107, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and fester (BDB 596, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - d. bent over ("bent," BDB 730, KB 796, *Niphal* PERFECT; "bowed down," BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 35:14) in mourning
 - e. loins are filled (BDB 569, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT) with burning
 - f. repeat of a. above
 - g. benumbed (BDB 806, KB 916, *Niphal* PERFECT, lit. "spent")
 - h. crushed (BDB 194, KB 221, *Niphal* PERFECT, *Piel* in Ps. 51:8)
 - i. groan (BDB 980, KB 1367, *Qal* PERFECT, i.e., animal sounds)

Notice the string of PERFECT TENSE VERBS. YHWH's "anger" (BDB 893) and "wrath" (BDB 409) have come (IMPERFECTS) and remain (PERFECTS)! What a terrible condition of mind (vv. 4, 8b) and body!

38:4 "over my head" This VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of water.

1. flood as war – Isa. 8:8; 23:10; Dan. 11:10,40; Nahum 1:8
2. waves – literal in Isa. 54:9
3. waves – figurative of problems and emotions – Ps. 42:8; 88:16-17; 124:4-5

The psalmist's guilt from sin has overwhelmed him!

38:5 "fester" This VERB (BDB 596, KB 628, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used in Leviticus 26, the cursing and blessing passage parallel to Deuteronomy 27-28. It denoted a "rotten decay" (cf. Lev. 26:39 [twice]). Sin destroys! Often in horrible ways!

38:6 "mourning" This term is from the Hebrew root "to be dark" (BDB 871). It could mean

1. dressed in dark clothing as a sign of mourning
2. dirt placed on head and clothing as a sign of mourning
3. an idiom for the condition of the heart, soul, mind (here because of known sin)

▣ **"I am bent over and greatly bowed down"** There are two parallel VERBS.

1. bent over – BDB 730, KB 796, *Niphal* PERFECT which can be viewed as
 - a. bewilderment – Isa. 21:3
 - b. perversion of mind – I Sam. 20:30; Pro. 12:8
 - c. literal – which matches the parallel VERB
2. bowed down – BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Qal* PERFECT which seems to denote a bent body as a figure of a bent heart

38:7 "loins" There are several terms that are used in the OT to represent the whole person.

1. soul – BDB 659, *nephesh*
2. spirit – BDB 924, *ruah*
3. heart – BDB 524, *leb*
4. kidneys – BDB 480
5. only here, loins – BDB 492

There are several more. Only context can determine when this concept is meant. One part of the body represents the whole person.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:9-12

⁹**LORD, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.**
¹⁰**My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me.**
¹¹**My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.**
¹²**Those who seek my life lay snares *for me*;
And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,
And they devise treachery all day long.**

38:9-12 This strophe also describes the author's terrible condition.

1. his condition
 - a. his desire (i.e. prayer) is before YHWH (i.e., for forgiveness and restoration of fellowship)
 - b. his sighing is known to YHWH, cf. Ps. 31:10
2. his physical condition
 - a. heart throbs – BDB 695, KB 749, *Niphal* PERFECT
 - b. strength fails – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT
 - c. eyes fail – no VERBS; this is not referring to blindness but is an idiom for the lack of health, joy, peace, cf. Ps. 13:3; I Sam. 14:29; Ezra 9:8
3. interpersonal issues
 - a. loved ones stand aloof
 - b. friends stand aloof
 - c. kinsmen stand far off
 - d. enemies seek his death
 - (1) lay snares
 - (2) threaten destruction
 - (3) devise treachery all day long; the VERB BDB 211, KB 237, is lit. “groan.” The psalmist “groans” (BDB 980, v. 8) but the wicked “devise” (cf. Pro. 24:2).

38:11

NASB, NKJV	“plague”
NRSV, JPSOA	“affliction”
TEV	“sores”
NJB	“disease”
REB	“sickness”

The word (BDB 619) means “stroke/wound,” “plague,” or “mark.”

1. plague – cf. Gen. 12:17; Exod. 11:1; I Kgs. 8:37-38; II Chr. 6:28-29; Ps. 39:10; 91:10
2. leprosy (OT sense) – Leviticus 13-14; Deut. 24:8
3. wound – Deut. 17:8; 21:5; Isa. 53:8
4. discipline (for children) – II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:33; Pro. 6:23

Most words have multiple usages or else human vocabulary would be impossible to know and use. When an interpreter comes to a context, they seek the meaning intended by the original author and understandable to the hearers/readers of that day. This context is a divinely given physical manifestation of His displeasure

over human sin. The punishment is meant to restore the person to faith. In this verse the parallelism suggests that the physical punishment frightened those who saw it, even close friends and relatives.

Therefore, in coming to a choice, several items are in play.

1. What physical manifestation?
2. Why the manifestation?
3. Why the response from others close by?
4. Is it figurative or literal?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:13-22

- ¹³**But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;
And *I am* like a mute man who does not open his mouth.**
- ¹⁴**Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.**
- ¹⁵**For I hope in You, O LORD;
You will answer, O LORD my God.**
- ¹⁶**For I said, “May they not rejoice over me,
Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me.”**
- ¹⁷**For I am ready to fall,
And my sorrow is continually before me.**
- ¹⁸**For I confess my iniquity;
I am full of anxiety because of my sin.**
- ¹⁹**But my enemies are vigorous *and* strong,
And many are those who hate me wrongfully.**
- ²⁰**And those who repay evil for good,
They oppose me, because I follow what is good.**
- ²¹**Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me!**
- ²²**Make haste to help me,
O LORD, my salvation!**

38:13-22 This strophe has a mixture of current conditions (sickness, pain, injury) and future hope in YHWH's mercy.

1. current physical problems
 - a. does not hear (i.e., pretends he does not hear their slander), v. 13; Ps. 39:2,4
 - b. does not speak (i.e., respond to his accusers, cf. Isa. 53:7), v. 13b
 - c. ready to stumble, vv. 16b-17a; metaphor for trouble, cf. Deut. 32:35; God's path was straight, level, and clear of obstacles
 - d. sorrow continually before him (his sin weighs heavily on him), v. 17b; Ps. 51:3
 - e. full of anxiety, v. 18
2. his enemies attack, vv. 16,19-20
 - a. they grow strong and numerous, v. 19a
 - b. they hate him wrongfully, v. 19b
 - c. they repay evil for good, v. 20; Ps. 35:12; 109:5
 - d. they oppose him because he does what is good, v. 20b

3. confidence in YHWH's love, mercy, and forgiveness
 - a. hope (lit. "wait," BDB 403, KB 407, *Hiphil* PERFECT) in YHWH, v. 15a, cf. Job 13:15; Ps. 31:24; 33:22; 39:7; 42:5,11; 43:5
 - b. confident YHWH will answer his prayer, v. 15b
 - c. confident his enemies will not succeed and gloat over his fall, v. 16
 - d. he prays (two *JUSSIVES*, one *IMPERATIVE*)
 - (1) do not forsake me – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a *JUSSIVE* sense, cf. Ps. 9:11; 71:9,18; 94:14; 119:8; Isa. 49:14
 - (2) do not be far from me – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a *JUSSIVE* sense, cf. Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 71:12
 - (3) make haste to help me – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 22:19b; 40:13; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1

38:18 This is the theological key to this Psalm (cf. Ps. 32:5). Confession brings

1. forgiveness from YHWH (cf. Psalm 51; note I John 1:9-2:1)
2. forgiveness for self
3. a sense of restoration of fellowship

Confession recognizes

1. human guilt for breaking YHWH's laws
2. YHWH's character of forgiveness and mercy

38:19

NASB, NKJV	“vigorous”
NRSV	“without cause”
TEV	“healthy”
NJB, REB	“without cause”
NET Bible	“for no reason”

The MT has “living” (חַיִּים, BDB 313), but several English translations emend the root to חָנַן, BDB 336, cf. Ps. 35:19; 69:4. This fits the parallelism of the next line, “who hate me wrongfully” (BDB 1055).

38:20 “adversaries” This is the Hebrew root (BDB 966) from which we get the term “satan.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an archenemy of good, but a servant of YHWH, who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.
2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” (BDB 966) can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (cf. I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (cf. Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (cf. I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. *Book of Wisdom* 2.23-24; *II Enoch* 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become angels in *I Enoch* 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism; also note I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp.770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an archangelic enemy of YHWH developed from the two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, and were then developed by the rabbis into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does YHWH punish His sinful followers in this life (vv. 2-3)?
2. Is verse 4 a confession of many sins or a literary ways of asserting the sinfulness of all humans?
3. List the physical problems associated with unconfessed sin.
4. Define the word “plague” in verse 11. Does your definition explain others’ reactions to him?
5. How is the imagery of “foot slip” related to a life of sin?
6. Why is verse 18 so important?

PSALM 39

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Vanity Of Life	Prayer for Wisdom and Forgiveness	Prayer for Healing In Sickness (A Lament)	The Confession of a Sufferer	Insignificance of Human Beings Before God
<p><u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director, for Jeduthun.” A Psalm of David</p>				
39:1-6	39:1-3 39:4-6	39:1-6	39:1-4 39:5-6	39:1-2 39:3-4 39:5-6
39:7-11	39:7-11	39:7-10 39:11	39:7-11	39:7-9 39:10-11
39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. At first this Psalm is confusing. It starts out in a veiled literary technique, almost like a divine secret that cannot be shared/understood by outsiders to a faithful (but still sinful) walk with YHWH, v. 8.

- B. The divine secret and human question is the transitoriness of human life. Mankind is so frail, fragile, temporary, ignorant, and usually focuses his/her attention on the wrong things (cf. vv. 6, 11).
- C. This Psalm in many ways reminds me of Ecclesiastes (the futility of life if there is no God). The psalmist characterizes himself in surprising ways.
1. like a stranger, v. 12
 2. like a sojourner, v. 12
- D. Verse 13 is still a mystery to me. The shocking truth of our fallen condition is that
1. we are attracted to God
 2. His holiness frightens us and repels us, all at once!
- There is a real mental conflict between the transitoriness of the human situation and the eternity of our God who created us for fellowship. We cannot be happy without knowing and loving Him. But we are broken and temporal. He is perfect and eternal.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:1-6

¹I said, “I will guard my ways
That I may not sin with my tongue;
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle
While the wicked are in my presence.”

²I was mute and silent,
I refrained *even* from good,
And my sorrow grew worse.

³My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned;
Then I spoke with my tongue:

⁴“LORD, make me to know my end
And what is the extent of my days;
Let me know how transient I am.

⁵Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.

⁶Surely every man walks about as a phantom;
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;
He amasses *riches* and does not know who will gather them.”

39:1-6 The wicked live only for today, for themselves, but the faithful follower knows he lives and speaks for YHWH. However, without the aid of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65) the wicked cannot comprehend

1. their own spiritual and physical condition
2. the truth of God

They ask the wrong questions and focus on the wrong things.

39:1 “I will guard” Notice that the VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) is repeated. The psalmist should not speak his thought about life and God in the presence of entrenched unbelief (i.e., Matt. 7:6). This strophe cannot be proof-texted as a Scripture against witnessing to others. But it is true that some issues, some doctrines should be avoided in our conversations with unbelievers at first because of possible misunderstanding or confusion. A biblical worldview requires

1. the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65)
2. a receptive heart (Matthew 13)
3. revelation in an understandable form
4. time/effort

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 374) interprets the silence as the psalmist not wanting to complain about his life in the presence of the wicked.

▣ **“That I may not sin with my tongue”** The sin here must be understood in context as speaking truth that the wicked cannot receive (cf. Matt. 7:6).

39:2-3 Apparently the psalmist tried not to think on these issues himself. But revelation caused him to address God with his question and concern about the fleetingness and transitoriness of human life.

39:2 “I refrained even from good” The MT of this line is “I held my peace to no avail” (i.e., without success; lit. “no good,” BDB 373). This is ambiguous and different translations explain it differently. In context it refers to the psalmist’s desire to speak but felt he should not. His reluctance to speak did not help the situation.

If life is so short, what should fallen humans focus on? The fate of the righteous and the unrighteous seems the same (cf. Eccl. 2:14-16,19,26; 9:2-3).

39:3 “the fire burned” This VERB (BDB 128, KB 145, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the same that describes Jeremiah’s compulsion to speak YHWH’s word (cf. Jer. 20:9).

39:4-6 These are the issues the psalmist was “musing” (BDB 211, cf. Ps. 5:1) about.

1. the uncertainty of life
2. the fleetingness of life
3. the false focus (i.e., fame, riches) of life
4. the unfairness of life

39:5 “handbreadths” This term (BDB 381) is one of several Hebrew measurements from the human body.

1. arms outstretched
2. finger tip to elbow
3. fingers outstretched
4. four fingers together
5. one digit of a finger

SPECIAL TOPIC: CUBIT

There are two cubits (BDB 52, KB 61) in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between an average man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches (e.g., Gen. 6:15; Exod. 25:10,17,23; 26:2,8,13,16; 27:1,9,12,13,14,16,18; Num. 35:4,5; Deut. 3:11). There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction (i.e., Solomon’s temple), which was common in Egypt (i.e., 21 fingers), Palestine (i.e., 24 fingers), and sometimes Babylon (i.e., 30 fingers). It was 21 inches long (cf. Ezek. 40:5; 43:13).

The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. The people of the Ancient Near East used:

1. length from elbow to middle finger (cubit)
2. width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span, cf. Exod. 28:16; 39:9; I Sam. 17:4)
3. length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth, cf. Exod. 25:25; 37:12; I Kgs. 7:26; II Chr. 4:5)
4. length of middle joint of finger (fingerbreadth, Jer. 52:21)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths.

1. normal male's elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11)
2. royal cubit was a bit longer (about 20 inches, cf. II Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

▣ **“my lifetime as nothing in Your sight”** This is not asserting that YHWH does not care but that human life is fleeting and insignificant when compared to YHWH (cf. Isa. 40:15).

▣ **“a mere breath”** This phrase (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT BDB 210 I) is another connection to Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl. 1:2; 12:8; lit. “vapor,” “breath,” “vanity”). This term is used thirty times in Ecclesiastes and only nine in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 39:5,6,11; 144:4) and three in Proverbs.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

39:6 “phantom” This is literally “shadow” (BDB 853). It can refer to clouds but is used regularly in a figurative sense of the transitoriness of life (cf. Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps. 102:11; 109:23; 144:4). This is the issue of this Psalm! Psalm 8 would be a good theological parallel.

▣ **“He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them”** This is so similar to the thought of *Qoheleth* in Eccl. 2:18-23.

The NASB Study Bible (p. 778) has a good comment on this verse.
“Could almost serve as a summary of Ecclesiastes.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:7-11

⁷**“And now, LORD, for what do I wait?**

My hope is in You.

⁸**Deliver me from all my transgressions;**

Make me not the reproach of the foolish.

⁹**I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,**

Because it is You who have done *it*.

¹⁰**Remove Your plague from me;**

Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.

¹¹**With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;**

You consume as a moth what is precious to him;

Surely every man is a mere breath.”

Selah.

39:7-11 This strophe is a general summary of how YHWH deals with His faithful followers amidst all the questions and confusion of life in a fallen world.

1. they wait for YHWH
2. they hope in YHWH (#1,2 are the theological key in our mysterious and transitory lives)
3. they pray for deliverance from YHWH – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 38:10)
4. they pray not to be foolish – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. YHWH guides our words and life (cf. Psalm 139)
6. they seek the removal of YHWH’s judgment – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

In verses 10-11 the reasons for YHWH’s actions are spelled out.

1. YHWH is active in their lives
2. YHWH’s judgments are disciplinary not just punitive
3. YHWH takes away the things we trust in and cherish more than Him! Everything except YHWH is transitory! Do you get it?!

39:10

NASB, NKJV,

JPSOA “plague”

NRSV “stroke”

TEV, REB “blows”

NJB, LXX “scourge”

The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 619, see note at Ps. 38:11) is used often of a disease sent by YHWH.

1. plague – Gen. 12:17; Exod. 11:1; I Kgs. 8:37; Ps. 38:11; 39:10
2. strike/stroke – Ps. 89:23; Isa. 53:8
3. scourge – Ps. 89:23

YHWH can remove it because He sent it! It is always hard, if not impossible, to know the source of an illness, event, crisis, etc. in this life. The OT’s theology attributed all causality to YHWH as a theological way of asserting monotheism. But from the progressive revelation of the NT several options arise.

1. God does send things
 - a. for punishment
 - b. for spiritual growth (cf. Heb. 5:8)
2. God allows (not sends) things to occur
3. we live in a fallen world where bad things happen (statistical evil)

I have chosen, by faith (as did the psalmist), to trust, hope, and wait (cf. Ps. 38:15; 39:7) on God in the midst of the mysterious, unfair, often evil events of life. I do not understand “why” or “why now” or “why this” or “how long,” but I do by faith believe that God is with me, for me, and that there can be a purpose and effective outcome for all things (cf. Rom. 8:28-30,31-39)! It is a worldview, a faith stance, a theological orientation!

☐ **“the opposition of Your hand”** Hand is an idiom for power to act (see Special Topic at Ps. 7:3-4). As to the theological issue see Ps. 32:4 and 38:2. God as a disciplining, loving parent is a wonderful metaphor (cf. Pro. 3:11-12). He is active in our lives because He does not want us to destroy ourselves and others. The “hand” of discipline has a positive purpose (cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:12-13

¹²“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry;

Do not be silent at my tears;

For I am a stranger with You,

A sojourner like all my fathers.

**¹³Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again
Before I depart and am no more.”**

39:12-13 As is common in the Psalms, it closes with prayer requests.

1. Hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. Give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. Do not be silent – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 28:1; 35:22; 83:1; 109:1
4. Turn Your gaze away – BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, see Job 7:17-19; 10:20-21; 14:6
5. That I may smile again – BDB 114, KB 132, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE, see Job 9:27; 10:20

39:12 The last two lines of this verse address the tension between

1. special covenant people
2. continuing sinners with fleeting lives (cf. I Chr. 29:15; Ps. 119:19,54; Heb. 11:13; I Pet. 2:11).

Remember this is the fog of the OT. The gospel of Jesus Christ will address many of these issues and questions about life, purpose, and eternity!

▣ **“I am a stranger”** This word/concept bothers me. It seems to denote one who does not know God or is not known by God. But in context it refers to a visitor in a tent who stays one or two nights and departs. It is another example of figurative language used to describe and bemoan the transitoriness of human life.

39:13 In light of the holiness of YHWH, this life becomes distressed (cf. Job 14:6). The pull to be like YHWH (cf. Matt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2) is overwhelming. Only in Jesus can a peace come for us to be in the presence (i.e., gaze, i.e., associated with YHWH’s judgment, cf. Job 7:19; 14:6; Isa. 22:4) of a holy God!

In light of this verse, Peter’s request in Luke 5:8 makes sense!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does the psalmist want to be silent in the presence of the wicked (v. 1)?
2. Explain in your own words the implication of verse 4.
3. What is a “handbreadth”?
4. Explain verse 11b. Why would YHWH take everything precious from one of His followers?
5. Does verse 11c imply that YHWH does not care about individual humans?
6. What does verse 12, c and d, mean? Are we strangers to YHWH?
7. Explain in your own words the meaning or implication of verse 13.

PSALM 40

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Sustains His Servant	Faith Persevering in Trial	Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Trouble, Together With a Prayer for Help	A Song of Praise	Song of Praise and Prayer For Help
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"				
40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1 40:2 40:3
40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4 40:5
40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-7a 40:7b-8
40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10
40:11-12	40:11-12	40:11-12	40:11 A Prayer For Help	40:11
40:13-17	40:13-15	40:13-15	40:12-15	40:12 40:13-14a 40:14b-15
	40:16-17	40:16-17	40:16-17	40:16 40:17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:1-3

¹I waited patiently for the LORD;

And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,

And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;

Many will see and fear

And will trust in the LORD.

40:1-3 The psalmist praises YHWH for His past acts of deliverance. YHWH responded to his prayers (i.e., “inclined,” BDB 639, KB 692, *Qal* IMPERFECT and “heard,” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

YHWH had

1. brought him up out of the pit of destruction (lit. “pit of tumult/noise,” BDB 92 CONSTRUCT BDB 981, cf. Ps. 69:2; this could be watery imagery of death (cf. Ps. 18:4) or a flood (cf. Ps. 18:16)
2. brought him up out of the miry clay
 - a. used of mire in the streets – II Sam. 22:43; Micah 7:10; Zech. 9:3; 10:5
 - b. used of mire in a cistern – Jer. 38:6
 - c. used figuratively of distress – Ps. 40:2; 69:14 (“pit” also mentioned in 69:15)
 - d. possibly refers to *Sheol* (i.e., death, UBS *Handbook*, p. 381)
3. set his feet upon a rock making his footsteps firm – godly faithful covenant followers were those who walked on straight, level, unobstructed paths (cf. Ps. 17:5; 18:36; 37:31; 44:18; 69:9; 73:2; 94:18; Job 23:11; 31:7)
4. put a new song in his mouth, a song of praise – new songs were a cultural way to acknowledge and glorify YHWH’s acts of deliverance (cf. Exodus 15; Judges 5; Deuteronomy 32); see note at Ps. 33:5; also note Ps. 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3

The purpose of YHWH’s deliverance of the psalmist was not just special treatment for one human but to bless and protect His covenant followers so that others (i.e., “many,” BDB 912 I) would become covenant followers.

1. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. fear – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. trust – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT

40:1 “waited patiently” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a PERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 875, KB 1082) used to denote intensity.

▣ **“inclined”** This VERB (BDB 639, KB 692, cf. Ps. 17:6; 88:2) means “to bend.” The imagery is either YHWH bent His ear to hear clearly or YHWH bent down to hear (cf. Job 15:29).

40:2 “rock” See note at Psalm 18:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:4-5

⁴How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust,

And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

⁵Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done,

**And Your thoughts toward us;
There is none to compare with You.
If I would declare and speak of them,
They would be too numerous to count.**

40:4-5 “How blessed is the man” This is the key thought of this strophe. This term (BDB 80) is used 26 times in the Psalms. See full note at Ps. 1:1. Psalm 41 starts with this phrase. It is used mostly in Psalms and Proverbs (i.e., Wisdom Literature), which focuses on a successful and prosperous life.

The reasons given for the blessed state are

1. who has made YHWH his trust
2. who has not turned (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* PERFECT) to the proud (LXX, NRSV, TEV see #2,3 referring to idols)
3. who has not turned (BDB 962, KB 1312, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, word found only here in the OT)

In verse 5 the attributes of YHWH are listed.

1. many are the wonders (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1 and note at Ps. 40:5)
2. many are His thoughts toward the covenant people
3. none compare with You (cf. Ps. 16:2; Isa. 6:8-10; i.e., monotheism, see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7)
4. His wonders and thoughts are too numerous to count
 - a. declare – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - b. speak – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

40:5 This verse seems to be reflecting on YHWH’s great acts of deliverance for Israel, especially the Exodus. The “us” must refer to the faith community from the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). Within the covenant community are the faithful and the unfaithful (cf. v. 4), yet YHWH sustains the whole community. He has a universal, redemptive purpose for Israel (cf. Ps. 33:10-12).

The term ‘wonder’ (BDB 810, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1) is often used in connection to the Exodus.

1. VERB – Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Deut. 28:59
2. NOUN – Exod. 15:11

The Exodus was the major evidence of YHWH’s fidelity to His promises (cf. Gen. 15:12-21) and the demonstration of His power and purpose for Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3).

▣ **“too numerous to count”** This may be a verbal link to the promises to Abraham that his descendants would be too numerous to count (i.e., as dust, cf. Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10; as sand, cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12; as stars, cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4). Another wonder of YHWH from an infertile, older couple!

A good parallel text would be Ps. 139:17-18, which also notes the numerous acts of deliverance by YHWH. Notice it mentions “outnumber the sand,” which is another allusion to the promise of Abraham’s descendants.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:6-8

**⁶Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired;
My ears You have opened;
Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.**

**⁷Then I said, “Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.**

**⁸I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your Law is within my heart.”**

40:6-8 This strophe uses the Mosaic Law as a literary foil to the psalmist's new personal relationship based on the concept similar to the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 (i.e., the Law is within my heart, cf. Isa. 51:7). The motivation for worship, obedience, service, and perseverance is internal (cf. Deut. 6:6).

The sacrificial system was YHWH's method of dealing with human sin among His covenant community. Innocent animals died in the place of sinful humans (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom 6:23). It was a typological model of the coming Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:1-18).

The problem with the Mosaic covenant is that for many Jews it became an external moral code instead of a means to intimate personal faith (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25; Rom. 2:28-29).

The NT sees this strophe (vv. 6-8) as ultimately fulfilled by Jesus' life and death (cf. Heb. 10:5-7 from the LXX). He is the perfect fulfillment of these texts. He is the "ideal Israelite," dying on behalf of all (cf. Isaiah 53).

40:6 There are four different words used to describe the different sacrifices of Israel (cf. Leviticus 1-7).

1. sacrifices – BDB 257, general term for sacrifices where part of the animal was eaten in a fellowship with their Deity
2. meal offerings – BDB 585, originally referred to both animal and grain offerings but came to be used of grain only
3. burnt offerings – BDB 750 II, referred to an offering that was consumed completely on the altar
4. sin offerings – BDB 308, one of two FEMININE NOUNS; this is the rarer one; it is translated "great sin" in Gen. 20:9; Exod. 32:21,30,31; II Kgs. 17:21; and "sin" in Ps. 32:1; 109:7. Here it seems to refer to a sin offering because of the parallelism but the usage is unique.

This verse is not a rejection of the sacrificial system but its abuse (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Ps. 50:8-14; 51:16-17; 69:30-31; Isa. 1:11-15; Jer. 7:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-22).



NASB, NKJV "opened"
NASB margin "dug or pierced"
NRSV margin "dug"
LXX "a body you have prepared for me"

This VERB (BDB 500, KB 496, *Qal* PERFECT) has this meaning only here. It is used of digging

1. a well – Gen. 26:25; Num. 21:18
2. a grave – Gen. 50:5
3. a pit – Exod. 21:23
4. figuratively a plot – Ps. 7:16; 57:7; 119:85; Pro. 16:27; 26:27; Jer. 18:20 (i.e., compare Jer. 6:10)

The NASB marginal suggestion, "pierced," possibly comes from Exod. 21:5-6 or Deut. 15:12-18, where a slave is made a permanent member of the household (cf. v. 17, different VERB and "ear" is SINGULAR).

The LXX translation must be based on a different Hebrew manuscript or it paraphrased the thought sensing that "ears" stood for the whole body. The LXX was what the early church used and it is quoted in Heb. 10:5 (cf. Heb. 10:1-18).

In context the VERB refers to the new relationship of faith and trust established by the new covenant model (i.e., "Your Law is within my heart," cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27), which allows sinful humans to clearly know and do YHWH's will (i.e., v. 8).

40:7

NASB, NKJV "Behold, I come"
NRSV, TEV,
REB "Here I am"

NJB “Here I am, I am coming”
LXX “Look, I have come”
NET “Look, I come”

The translation, “Here I am,” comes from the use of the same interjection (BDB 243) used by Isaiah in Isa. 6:8, combined with the VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT), “I come” (different VERB from Isa. 6:8).

It is an idiom of availability and surrender to YHWH’s will and plan for one’s life (cf. vv. 7b-8). In this context (i.e., sacrifice) it may refer to the fact that in the OT there was no sacrifice for known, intentional sin (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14; Ps. 51:16-17). Only the sins of passion or ignorance were covered (i.e., unintentional). The psalmist sees that the only appropriate sacrifice was himself (cf. Rom.12:1). This is surely a foreshadowing of the Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29) who came to give Himself (cf. Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53).

▣ **“In the scroll of the book”** Some scholars see this as referring to YHWH’s revelation to Moses. The king was given a copy (cf. Deut. 17:18-20; I Kgs. 2:3; II Kgs. 11:12). The Bible uses “book(s)” to denote YHWH’s plans for each person (cf. Ps. 139:1-6,16) or memory of the lives of all humans who will one day stand before Him as judge. This imagery is expressed in two books, the book of life and the book of deeds. See Special Topic: The Two Books at Ps. 9:5.

40:8 “I delight to do Your will” What a radical change from Genesis 3. The damaged “image of God” has been restored! Fellowship at the deepest level is possible again. The independent spirit of the Fall is replaced by a dependent spirit.

Jesus modeled this servant attitude for us to see (cf. Matt. 26:39; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:9-10

⁹I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation;

Behold, I will not restrain my lips,

O LORD, You know.

¹⁰I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.

40:9-10 The psalmist witnesses of YHWH’s attributes in a temple/tabernacle (cf. Ps. 22:25) worship setting (i.e., the great congregation).

1. Your righteousness – BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5
2. Your faithfulness – BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1
3. Your salvation – BDB 448, see Special Topic at Ps. 13:5-6
4. Your lovingkindness – BDB 338, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7
5. Your Truth – BDB 54, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1

Verse 11 adds to this list (the strophe division is uncertain).

6. Your compassion – BDB 933
7. Your lovingkindness – BDB 338
8. Your Trust – BDB 54

These are the great theological words of the OT which describe how the covenant God deals with the sons/daughters of Adam because of His special call of Abraham (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.).

40:9 “You know” YHWH knows the heart of His human creation (cf. Josh. 22:22; I Sam. 2:3; 16:7; I Kgs. 8:39; I Chr. 28:9; Ps. 139:2-4; Jer. 17:10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27).

40:10 Notice the series of VERBS whereby the psalmist affirms his full and open testimony about YHWH.

1. I have proclaimed – BDB 142, KB 163, *Piel* PERFECT, v. 9
2. I have not hidden – BDB 491, KB 487, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 10
3. I have spoken – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 10
4. I have not concealed – BDB 470, KB 469, *Piel* PERFECT

YHWH desires that His people lift up His character and actions in praise and witness, so that all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) may come to know and worship Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:11-12

**¹¹You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me;
Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.
¹²For evils beyond number have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see;
They are more numerous than the hairs of my head,
And my heart has failed me.**

40:11-12 This strophe describes the current situation of the psalmist. YHWH is surely with him but there are problems (a series of PERFECTS).

1. evils beyond number have surrounded me – BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT; this list (AB, p. 247) is imagery taken from a pack of wild dogs attacking their prey; this number of problems is contrasted with YHWH’s “wonders” in v. 5
2. my iniquities have overtaken me – BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* PERFECT; in several Psalms in Book One the psalmist acknowledges his sin, cf. 25:11; 31:10; 32:5; 38:4,18; this may be a literary way of affirming the sinfulness of all humans
3. I am not able to see – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* PERFECT; possibly connected to constant weeping, cf. Ps. 69:3; sin always causes a disruption in our relationship with God and our ability to know His will
4. he acknowledges his iniquities are very many – BDB 782, KB 868, *Qal* PERFECT; the imagery of “hairs of the head” is repeated in Ps. 69:4 and used by Jesus of YHWH’s knowledge of us in Matt. 10:30; it is an OT idiom, cf I Sam. 14:45; II Sam. 14:11; I Kgs. 1:52; Acts 27:34
5. his heart has failed (i.e., left) him – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT

The life of the faithful follower is a struggle between indwelling sin (cf. Romans 7) and God’s grace and mercy (cf. Romans 8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:13-17

**¹³Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
Make haste, O LORD, to help me.
¹⁴Let those be ashamed and humiliated together
Who seek my life to destroy it;
Let those be turned back and dishonored
Who delight in my hurt.
¹⁵Let those be appalled because of their shame
Who say to me, “Aha, aha!”**

**¹⁶Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
 Let those who love Your salvation say continually,
 “The Lord be magnified!”
¹⁷Since I am afflicted and needy,
 Let the Lord be mindful of me.
 You are my help and my deliverer;
 Do not delay, O my God.**

40:13-17 As usual the concluding strophe is a series of prayer requests (IMPERFECTS and JUSSIVES in synonymous parallelism). This is very similar to Psalm 70.

1. Be pleased (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to deliver me (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). AB, p. 247, suggests a vowel change to the root for “run,” which parallels #2 better.
2. Make haste to help me – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1
3. Let those who seek my life be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 35:4,26; 70:2; 63:17
4. Let those who seek my life be humiliated together – BDB 344, KB 346, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. Let those who delight in my hurt be turned back – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 35:4,26; 70:2 (this is military imagery)
6. Let those who delight in my hurt be dishonored – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. Let those who say to me “Aha, aha” (cf. Ps. 35:21; 70:3) be appalled – BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

At verse 16 the prayers change from negative to positive.

8. Let all those who seek You rejoice – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (notice that the wicked “seek” his life [BDB 134, KB 152] but the psalmist seeks YHWH, cf. v. 16)
9. Let all those who seek You be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
10. Let those who love Your salvation say. . . – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (faithful followers love YHWH by being obedient to His revealed will and way, cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 19:9; 30:15,16,19-20)
11. “. . . YHWH be magnified” – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (this is in contrast to what the wicked say in v. 15)
12. Let YHWH be mindful of me – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* JUSSIVE
13. Do not delay – BDB 29, KB 34, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 70:5; this forms an *inclusio* with “make haste” of v. 13

40:17 Notice how the psalmist characterizes himself and YHWH.

1. himself
 - a. afflicted (BDB 776)
 - b. needy (BDB 2)
 (these are often used of faithful followers, cf. Ps. 70:5; 86:1; 109:22; in this sense they are metaphorical of a sense of spiritual need, cf. Matt. 5:3-6)

2. YHWH (MT has *Adon* but some Hebrew MSS have YHWH)
 - a. his help (BDB 740 I)
 - b. his deliverer (BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* PARTICIPLE)

▣ **“O my God”** In this Psalm YHWH and *Elohim* are used often and combined in verse 5.

1. YHWH, vv. 1,3,4,9,11,13 (twice),16
2. *Elohim*, vv. 3,5,8,17

See Special Topic at Psalm 1:1 for a detailed discussion of how the OT writers used these designations/titles/names for Deity to assert different aspects of His character and actions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the mood of verses 1-10; and then verses 11-17. What has changed?
2. List and explain the attributes of YHWH in verses 10-11.
3. How is the imagery of walking used to describe the life of faith?
4. Does verse 5 allude to Genesis or Exodus, or both? Why?
5. How can the LXX translation of v. 6b (cf. Heb. 10:5-7) be so different from the MT?
6. Is this a Messianic Psalm?
7. What “book” or “scroll” is verse 7b talking about?
8. Explain why verses 13-17 reappear in Psalm 70.

PSALM 41

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Psalmist In Sickness Complains of Enemies and False Friends <u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"	The Blessing and Suffering of the Godly	Prayer For Healing From Sickness (A Lament)	A Prayer In Sickness	Prayer of a Sufferer Deserted
41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3
41:4-9	41:4-6 41:7-9	41:4-10	41:4-9	41:4-9
41:10-12	41:10-12	41:11-12	41:10-13	41:10-12
0.17569444444	41:13	41:13		41:13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:1-3

- ¹How blessed is he who considers the helpless;
The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.
- ²The LORD will protect him and keep him alive,
And he shall be called blessed upon the earth;
And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies.
- ³The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed;
In his illness, You restore him to health.

41:1-3 This first strophe is describing the blessings (BDB 80, see note at Ps. 1:1) of the person who obeys the Law of Moses, which requires Israel to be kind, supportive, and attentive to those in need (BDB 195, cf. Exod. 23:5; Lev. 14:21; Ps. 72:13; 82:3; 113:7; Pro. 19:17; 21:13; 28:3,8; 29:7,14). Those who help them are, in reality, helping their God (see Jesus' discussion about the last judgment in Matt. 25:31-46).

The type of persons described by this term.

1. widow (cf. Exod. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 24:17-18; 27:19; Ps. 68:5)
2. orphan
3. alien (cf. Lev. 19:33-34; Exod. 22:21-22; Deut. 24:17-18; 27:19)
4. blind/lame
5. socially powerless (landless)
6. bereft of worldly provisions (no necessary things for life—food, shelter, work, etc.)

Notice what YHWH will do for an obedient covenant follower (helping the poor is just one item but it stands here for the whole law).

1. YHWH will deliver him in a day of trouble
2. YHWH will protect him
3. YHWH will keep him alive
4. he will be called “blessed” (MT has IMPERFECT but the Masoretic scholars thought the PERFECT with a *waw* was better; the meaning does not change)
5. YHWH will not give him over to his enemies
6. YHWH will sustain him upon his sickbed
7. YHWH will restore him to health

Notice all the IMPERFECT VERBS, denoting ongoing actions by God throughout life.

Just a note about the general statements like this in Wisdom Literature. This should not be understood as a promise that affects every person, every time, who helps the poor. This is a general statement. This is true the majority of the time but not each and every time. We live in a fallen world!

This is a good illustration of Matthew 7. How one lives, how one speaks, how one allocates his resources and time reveal the priority commitment of the heart!

41:2 “upon the earth” The Hebrew word “land” (BDB 75) can mean

1. field
2. district
3. country
4. area
5. world

See Special Topic at Ps. 1:2. Only context can tell. I have been convinced by Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* that the flood of Genesis 6-9 was local because of the use of this word in that context. See my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:4-9

**⁴As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.”**

**⁵My enemies speak evil against me,
“When will he die, and his name perish?”**

**⁶And when he comes to see *me*, he speaks falsehood;
His heart gathers wickedness to itself;
When he goes outside, he tells it.**

⁷All who hate me whisper together against me;

Against me they devise my hurt, *saying*,
⁸“A wicked thing is poured out upon him,
That when he lies down, he will not rise up again.”
⁹Even my close friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.

41:4-9 The logical connection between these strophes is not stated. Possibly the author was a man like the one described in verses 1-3, but his life was in distress and attack from others. Apparently he recognized that he had sinned (v. 4). Many of the last psalms of Book I (Psalm 1-41) mention a confession or acknowledgment of sin.

There are several problems mentioned.

1. he is sick of body and spirit
2. he has enemies who slander him (vv. 5-7)
3. they are planning evil against him (vv. 7-8)
4. his enemies were at one time close friends (v. 9; cf. Ps. 35:11-16; 55:12-13,20). This is quoted in John 13:18 about Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

41:7 “whisper together” This VERB (BDB 538, KB 527, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) can be used of curses/charms (cf. Ps. 58:5; Eccl. 10:11; Isa. 3:2-3) or it could just be people speaking in a low voice so as not to be heard (cf. II Sam. 12:19) or a low voice in prayer (cf. Isa. 26:16).

If it does refer to a curse in this context, verse 8 is the result.

41:8

NASB “a wicked thing is poured out upon me”

NKJV “an evil disease, *they say*, clings to him”

NRSV “they think a deadly thing has fastened on to him”

TEV “They say, ‘He is fatally ill’”

NJB “a fatal sickness has a grip on him”

REB “an evil spell is cast on him, they say”

The term “wicked” (BDB 116) later became the title *Belial* (i.e., Deut. 13:13; II Cor. 6:15). It was used in several senses, a good sample is in I Sam. 1:16; 2:12; 25:17.

The usage here seems to be a personification of a disease which they would have seen as being sent by YHWH because of the sin of the psalmist (cf. Job's three friends). But YHWH's actions toward him in vv. 10-12 show that their statements are lies/slander.

41:9 “Has lifted his heel against me” This act of cultural rejection (notice there is no parallel passage) came after a fellowship/covenant meal (cf. Gen. 26:28-30; 31:51-54; Exod. 12:18; 24:5; Ps. 69:23).

It is possible to see this as

1. an act of aggression/violence against the psalmist (i.e., stomped with the feet)
2. an act of insult expressed by a gesture. In the Middle East it is still a strong insult to show someone the bottom of one's shoe.

The rejection is all the more poignant because of the apparent friendship between the two of them.

▣ **“my close friend”** This is literally “man of peace who turned out to be a child of *Belief*” (v. 8a).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:10-12

**¹⁰But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up,
That I may repay them.**

**¹¹By this I know that You are pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.**

**¹²As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And You set me in Your presence forever.**

41:10-12 In verse 4 there were two requests (IMPERATIVES).

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. heal my soul (*nephesh*, see note at Ps. 3:2) – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Now in the next strophe there are two IMPERATIVES and a COHORTATIVE.

1. same as #1 above, v. 4
2. raise me – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (same request, different but parallel VERB from #2 above), v. 4
3. that I may repay them – BDB 1022, KB 1532 *Piel* COHORTATIVE; the psalmist wants to be YHWH's instrument of justice

Healing will be a visible evidence that YHWH has heard and answered his prayers. It is not just the visible manifestation of YHWH that rejoices the psalmist but

1. it is a sign YHWH is pleased (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) with him
2. YHWH has upheld (BDB 1069, KB 1751, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 63:8) his integrity (BDB 1070), which means innocence (cf. Ps. 25:21; 101:2; Pro. 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6)
3. YHWH set him (BDB 662, KB 714, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*) in His presence (i.e., tabernacle/temple, cf. Ps. 16:11; 23:6; 27:4-6) forever (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:13

**¹³Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.**

41:13 This is a doxological, liturgical close (cf. Ps. 72:18-19; 89:52; 103:19-22; 106:48; 150:6). It probably was not originally part of Psalm 41, but a general close to the first book (Psalm 1-41) of the Psalter.

1. Psalm 72:18-19 ends Book II
2. Psalm 89:52 ends Book III
3. Psalm 106:47-48 ends Book IV
4. Psalm 150:6 ends Book V

▣ **“Amen, and Amen”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for
 1. “truth” (*emeth*, BDB 49)
 2. “truthfulness” (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53)

3. “faith” or “faithfulness”
 4. “trust” (*dmn*, BDB 52)
- B. Its etymology is from a person’s stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Psalm 35:6; 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 4. stability, Isa. 33:6
 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Pro. 12:22
 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,160
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
 2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity’s only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind’s ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word “amen” as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement’s trustworthiness is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as “trust,” “faith,” “believe.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is verse 1a referring to?
2. How are sin and sickness related?
3. Does verse 7 address gossip and slander or curses and charms?
4. What are “the wicked things” of verse 8?
5. How is verse 9 used in the NT?
What does it imply?
6. Exactly what is the psalmist asserting in verse 12? What does he want?
7. Why is verse 13 not part of the Psalm?

APPENDIX ONE – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."