

1. In this lesson we finish what scholars call the "Royal Psalms". That is just a fancy name for the fact that Psalms 93 through 100 all have a common theme about praising God and looking forward to the day that the Messiah (Jesus) will come back and rule over the world.
 - a) The only psalms left in this group we have not covered is Psalms 98-100. All three are fairly short psalms. I was tempted to include a few more but wisely held off on that idea.
 - i) Then God hit me with another idea: John, why don't you spend some time in this lesson explaining a more about "life in the millennium" and why that is important? So, being pretty sure that is what God wants me to do, I present this lesson.
 - b) With that said, let me give my title. It is "Learning to appreciate our eternal future as Christians". What I mean by that is we have already talked about in the last two lessons why God wants us to be joyful (so we learn to appreciate life more) and why God wants us to praise Him (so we can appreciate what He has done for us).
 - i) That leaves us with one other key point about our relationship with God: What will He do for us in the future? That is the subject of this lesson and believe it or not the main theme of these last three psalms in this group.
2. Before I get into all of that, let me come back to the theme of "Book 4" of the Psalms. As I have explained, many suspect that this fourth book of the Psalm loosely tie to the 4th book of the bible, which is Numbers. The idea is as the Israelites were sentenced to wander through the desert for 40 years, for a lack of trust in God, so we as Christians have our own "wandering" as we have to learn to completely trust God with every aspect of our lives.
 - a) OK John, how does that statement tie to this lesson? So glad you asked. As I have stated in the past few lessons, learning to trust God is also about learning to praise Him for all of the good that He has done, is doing and will do in our lives. It is about learning to praise God so we can have that joy filled life that the bible describes so often.
 - b) To put it another way, God does not want us to be miserable. He wants us to appreciate life and in particular the wonderful things He has given us and will give us as believers.
 - i) With that said, the focus of this lesson is not on the past or present, but on the future. It is about understanding what God will do for us as individual believers as well as "us" as a collection of all resurrected believers one future day.
 - c) In summary, my goal in this lesson is to make us more joyful about our eternal future. That is what the psalms in this lesson focus on and I want all of us to benefit from that.
3. This gets me back to my lesson title. What I do want to do in this lesson is to explain in more detail what I mean by God's "millennial" rule and why that is important to our lives now.
 - a) To do that, I need to remind all of us of what I was taught as the most important thing a bible teacher can do: make the bible relevant to people's lives today. To paraphrase a great bible preacher, "Who cares about the Amorites, Hittites and Jebusites when I've got bills to pay and my kids are sick?" (Haddon W. Robinson) That means one should not teach bible history but should teach about how the bible is relevant to our lives.
 - i) With that said, let me explain my "relevance" relates to the millennium. Most Evangelical Protestants like myself will argue this is a future period of time where Jesus will literally rule over the world. Just so you know, many Roman Catholic scholars believe this concept is just about God ruling in our hearts. Most religious Jews believe the millennium refers to a time when "the" Messiah (who they argue is not Jesus) will come and rule over the world.
 - ii) I have read and studied my bible way too much to take this view as anything but literal. In this lesson, I spend some time explaining why this view is so important and why I believe my view is the correct interpretation of this issue.

4. To continue my "millennium relevance, let me review the biblical phrase "The Day of the Lord".
 - a) According to my bible that phrase is used 19 times in the Old Testament and 8 times in the NIV New Testament. The phrase is describing the day of the Messiah (Jesus') return to earth. There are some commentators who argue that expression refers to "just when" God works in a mighty and visible way.
 - i) While some references to that phrase may work that way, if one looks at all of those passages, they all seem to be describing a future day when God literally comes to earth and rules over the world.
5. OK John, so what? Christians have been waiting for two thousand years for Jesus to return and religious Jews have been waiting for roughly three to four millennia for their Messiah to come. Why should I focus on this aspect?
 - a) For starters, if one looks at the bible as a whole, there is actually more text written about this time future timeframe than there is about the time frame Jesus walked on earth. In other words, the bible has more to say about Jesus Second Coming than His First Coming.
 - b) Next, and more importantly, it is about looking forward to our eternal future. Life as we know it can be very difficult at times. Being joyful now includes the idea of looking forward to a better tomorrow. God promises us a better tomorrow, which is why the bible is full of passages of His rule literally on the earth one day.
 - c) This leads me back to the question of how do we know this is true? Think of it this way: Do you believe the stories of Jesus living on earth 2,000 years ago are true? If one does, why would the same bible include far more stories about a future day when Jesus returns? Why would some of the same New Testament writers who wrote about and lived with Jesus also describe a future time of His return?
 - d) This also comes back to the idea of how would one rather live their life? Would one like to live assuming all there is in life is this life? Would we rather live assuming there is a fair God who judges the wrongs of this world and also promises us a wonderful future including a time frame where God Himself will come back and rule over the world?
 - i) Personally I would much rather live assuming God is in charge and also, He will come back to rule over this world.
 - ii) As I also like to ask, what does one say to a child dying of cancer, if one believes there is no next life? "Gee kid, too bad for you or better luck next time?" Isn't it better if they understood that there is a God who loves them and cares about them and has a wonderful eternal future for them?
 - e) In summary, understanding our eternal future is about trusting that God has great things planned for us who trust Him with our lives. Can I be 100% certain of that? Of course not. However, the bible is full of evidence of hundreds of predictions that have already come true over the past few millennia. With that great a track record, it gives me the confidence to trust in the bible for future predictions that have yet to come true.
 - i) If you would like some reading on this topic, I would suggest Zechariah Chapter 14 and Revelation 19 as a starting point about this future day.
 - f) Now let's get back to the reality of our lives today. Why should I spend time thinking about this eternal future as you say, "when my kids are sick and I have bills to pay?"
 - i) Again, so glad you asked. One reason we can have joy in God is because we know He has a great eternal future planned for us as believers. It is the reminder that all we deal with is temporary and is "nothing" compared to a great and eternal future that God has for us as believers. Having that eternal joy inside of us does give us the strength and power to face what we have to face in this lifetime.
 - g) OK, John what if you are still wrong? Well if one looks at how other major religions view devout Christians, most would argue we are still eternally saved. My point is I would still rather go through life believing what I believe than choose any other alternative. Am I 100% confident in my views? No, but I am still fairly certain Jesus will return one day.

6. Two pages are now done and we have yet to touch one bible verse in this lesson. What do you say I break down and start teaching the verses in these psalms and we'll see just how well they actually speak of this future day when God will rule from the earth.
7. Psalm 98 title: A psalm.
 - a) As opposed to the last few psalms that had no title whatsoever, this one does make the editorial comment that it "is" a psalm. OK why does it do that?
 - i) While we can't know for sure, I suspect it means that the author wants us to think about the words of this psalm and consider it's meaning.
 - ii) With that said, let's take a look at this psalm and see how it does affect our lives "here and now" as well as for the eternal future.
8. Verse 1: Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
 - a) The first thing this psalm talks about the concept that this is a "new song". OK you may ask, I don't know this tune. How can it be a "new song" for us? Some possibilities:
 - i) It may simply mean that when this psalm was written, the words are now a new song for us to sing and contemplate its meaning.
 - ii) I suspect it also means that when one considers the wonderful things God will do for us in the future, it makes us want to sing out in joy to Him now. I'm sure the words of this psalm can be sung, but I suspect this psalm's words are about considering the good that God will do one day for all of us who trust in Him.
 - b) I want you to notice the word "has" in this verse. It is saying God "has" done this.
 - i) Hey John, I thought you said this psalm is future oriented. How can it be "has"?
 - a) Think of the word "has" as in "It has been done". The idea is that while the future is unknown to us, it is certain to God as in He knows all things.
 - ii) I was thinking about something Chuck Missler said in describing all of the "Royal psalms", which again, are essentially Psalm 93, and 95-100. He said they make Him all the more want to focus on the goodness of God and all the great things He has done and will do for our lives. My point here is that one way to pray is just to think about all the great things God has done, is doing and will do for our lives. Thinking such joyful thoughts does get us in a better mood and should get us to appreciate God all the more.
 - iii) That is why I emphasized the "has". God "has" done this. That is also in effect what the expression "marvelous things" means in Verse 1. The idea is to be grateful for all of the great things He has done for our life. One can think about the big picture idea of things He has done in this world, or one can focus on the great things one has done in our own life. Either way, the focus is in on Him.
 - c) OK, while I'm explaining what certain words mean, let me explain God's "right hand and holy arm". I do not believe God literally has arms and hands. The idea of that phrase is simply to describe His power. Most people are right handed, which is their strongest side. The idea of describing God's right hand and right arm describes His power.
 - i) The point in this verse is the power that God has is used not only to do great things in this world, but also to bring us salvation.
 - ii) Let me put it this way: Can I explain exactly how I am resurrected? No, but I trust it is true. One reason God because man was to show us convincing proofs that we can be resurrected and live forever. One reason for the story of the resurrection of Jesus is to show that God has power over death and God chooses to use that power for those of us who respond to that love to be with Him forever.
 - iii) As I wrote this page of the lesson, I just found out about a friend from church past away at a relatively young age. My point is that it is by God's power than we can have comfort through such a tragic time. That's the point of this verse. That God's power is greater than that of death itself.

9. Verse 2: The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
 - a) I was thinking about this verse from the perspective of someone living in Israel 3,000 years ago, roughly when it was written. That is because it is easier for us Christians to understand the power of God's salvation as we have seen the power of the cross "work".
 - i) With that said, how did the writer of the psalm say and think that God has made His salvation known and God's "righteousness" to the nations?
 - a) On one hand, one can read this verse as being predictive about the future. It can simply be predicting the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is trusted by multitudes of people over two millennia. As I said, this psalm is "future oriented even to us". Therefore, this verse could also be predictive of the day when Jesus returns and the whole world becomes aware of the righteousness (i.e., God as a perfect deity) ruling over the world.
 - ii) Going back to the time of the Israelites, they could not have fully grasped God's plans. However, I suspect the verse is saying in effect, "God we don't know how and when you are going to make Your plan of salvation known to the world, but we trust that You will do this. We as Israelites know that You are the God who controls the world and one day your plan of salvation will not only be fully revealed to us as Israelites but also to the whole world."
 - b) Again, notice the word "has" in this verse. It "has" in the sense it is already a "done deal".
 - i) For those Israelites it is also "has" in the fact that even in that day, God has revealed Himself in a mighty way to those Israelites who did trust in the God of the bible and He has lead them into salvation by trusting in Him.
 - ii) That "has" is again future tense to them and us in that we trust in a perfect God to somehow make it possible for us to be with Him forever.
10. Verse 3a: He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;
 - a) Here is a question to ponder: If we as a group of believers have not been faithful to God, will that stop God from ever being faithful to us? I am convinced that we as believers can lose "rewards" based on how we act or we can lose our ability to be a good witness for Him, but as long as we believe in His payment for our sins we can't lose our salvation.
 - i) But then I thought, what about God in such situations? Does He ever become unfaithful to us when we are unfaithful to Him? The answer ties directly to the first half of Verse 3. No matter how bad the nation of Israel "messes up" in terms of collectively turning from God, He in turn cannot fail to be faithful to them.
 - ii) In effect, that is Paul's point in Romans Chapters 9 through 11. In those three chapters Paul talks about God's relationship with the Nation of Israel in the past (before Paul's time) in Chapter 9. In the present time in Chapter 10 (which is the era of the church age). Chapter 11 then discusses a future time (when the church era has come to an end) where God will once again focus on the nation of Israel.
 - iii) The point of that three-chapter exercise is to show that just because the nation of Israel is unfaithful to God, does not mean that God is unfaithful to Israel.
 - b) To put it another way, the issue for the nation Israel is not individual salvation. The issue is the nation of Israel as a witness for the God of the Bible. To me, the fact that the nation of Israel is back in the land after almost 2,000 years as an independent nation again, is proof to me that God is somehow going to work again in that nation after the "church era" comes to an end. (That is, at the time when Jesus returns for His church).
 - i) This point actually leads me back to this verse. God will always be faithful to the nation of Israel not because they (or us) are perfect people, but because He made an unconditional promise to be faithful to the descendants of Abraham and "give them" the land of Israel. That promise was not conditional upon them accepting Jesus as the Messiah. That promise is focusing on the nation of Israel and the land area they occupy. (See Genesis 15:18, and 26:4 as text support.)

11. Verse 3b: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
 - a) OK John, to comment on the last page, good for Israel. What about the rest of us? That is what the second half of this verse is about and that is why I split Verse 3 into two parts.
 - b) This second half says the ends of the word have (past tense) seen the salvation of our God.
 - i) The point is when the psalmist wrote this verse, the ends of the earth (i.e., all people) has not yet seen God rule over this world. The psalmist is obviously describing that future day when God will literally rule over the world.
 - c) Let's step back and describe why the psalmist is making this prediction about the future.
 - i) One way we can be comforted as believers is knowing that God will literally come back to right the wrongs of this world. This world is filled with sorrow due to the effect of sins in this world. The effect of sins among other things is what brings us death. It brings the end of many lives at young ages.
 - ii) Personally, I would rather live my life with the hope of a better future not only for my life, but for the future of the whole world, than to believe that the world will just continue, "the way it is" as it is right now.
 - iii) Trusting that God will return to rule over the world is a trust in a "better day coming" and that gives us the strength to get us through our present lives.
 - d) Let me also touch on the concept of the whole world seeing God now, at this time.
 - i) I do believe God gives all of us the instinctive knowledge that killing and stealing is wrong. One cannot explain that knowledge by "natural selection" or the false concept that people evolved from plant life. My point is if people simply think about life, the logical conclusion is that God exists, He made us and if He made us He must have some purpose for our lives.
 - ii) My point is I believe the whole world (most people) can believe in the existence of a single God and it makes sense if one wants to contemplate that fact. That is how the psalmist could also say that the whole world has seen God in this verse.
12. Verse 4: Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;⁵ make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,⁶ with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn-- shout for joy before the LORD, the King.
 - a) After taking the last verse in "halves", I figure I better pick up the pace a little. ☺
 - b) These three verses go best together. They start and finish with a "shout for joy to God".
 - i) Notice in Verse 4, that these verses are not for Israel, but for the world. The point seems to be that all of the earth will make a "joyful noise" when Jesus returns.
 - c) Let me talk about why the whole earth will sing when this happens. The verse does not say that just the Israelites will praise God's return, but the whole earth "shouting for joy":
 - i) Personally, I am sure there are going to be multitudes of people who will not be crazy about the idea of God literally ruling from the earth one day. I wonder if such people will be forced to sing praises to Him, or will they just be "wiped out"? We will have to wait for that day to find out the answer to that last question.
 - ii) As I like to say, the purpose of the psalms is not for unbelievers to study, but for us believers to study. After all, most unbelievers never read the psalms.
 - a) My point for us believers is we should sing praises to God because there is coming a day when He will "right the wrongs" of this world and He will rule over this world one day. My point is we should not wait for this day to literally happen before we sing praises to Him. We should be grateful now that one day God will literally rule over this world one day.
 - d) Also notice three musical instruments are mentioned besides singing: The harp, the trumpet and the ram's horn. Can one only praise God with those three instruments? Of course not. I do believe those instruments were part of the ancient Israelite "worship service" and therefore, they are prominently mentioned here in the psalms.

13. Verse 7: Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;
- a) Again, the theme of this psalm is about looking forward to a future day not only when we get to be with God in heaven, but also when He will rule and reign over the earth.
 - b) These verses mention "sea resounding", "rivers clapping their hands" and "mountains singing for joy". Obviously that is not meant to be taken literal, so what does it mean?
 - i) As I discussed in the last lesson, God cannot allow sin's existence in this world to go on forever. He allows sin to exist as to wait for as many people as possible to be saved. At the same time, for the sake of the world itself, God must bring an end to the influence of sin in this world just to be "fair" to the world He has created.
 - ii) What does that have to do with rivers and mountains? Such created aspects by God do suffer from the negative affects of sin. In that future day when God literally comes back and rules from the earth, that curse of sin will be removed.
 - iii) The point is the world we live in will be happy when sin is ended as an influence.
 - c) OK John, and all of this affects my life today, how?
 - i) When we see injustice or when we see tragedy, we can have comfort knowing that the problems of our world and the problems of our lives will not go on forever. We can have peace knowing that there is coming a future day that the whole world will benefit from, when God literally rules over the world.
 - ii) I don't know how God will see us through whatever we are dealing with at the moment, but I trust that He is there and He is guiding us if we are willing to trust in Him through such times. If there is one thing I have learned as a Christian, it is that "God leads, we follow, and that He does guide us through our lives."
 - iii) Knowing that sin and evil will not triumph forever, does give us the strength and courage to "move on" despite whatever one is facing at the moment.
 - iv) In summary, whatever we are dealing with will not go on forever, and we can take comfort that there is a future day where God will overcome all of the tragedies of this world brought on by the influence of sin and death in this world.
14. Verse 9: let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.
- a) This nine-line psalm ends with the request for "them" (believers) to sing before God because He is coming to judge this world.
 - i) In other words, the fact that God is going to return one day to judge this world, should not be a concern of fear, but should be a source of rejoicing.
 - b) Yes John, but what about my own sins? Shouldn't I fear God's judgment knowing that I (or we) are not perfect? Remember that we are perfectly forgiven based on our own trust in Jesus' payment for our sins. I do believe we can lose rewards in heaven based on a lack of faithfulness, but we will not be condemned if we trust in Jesus.
 - c) The point here is that Jesus will return to the earth one day for the purpose of judging people based on how they have lived their lives. The issue is not "how good we are", but the issue is what did we do with what knowledge we are given about God.
 - i) I am convinced that the purpose of life is not to live for our own happiness, but to live to make a difference for God in all that we do. The good news is that when we learn to live to please God, He in turn gives us far more joy in life than we could ever have trying to make ourselves happy without Him. That joy of trusting in Him is the underlying point of this whole psalm. The joy of knowing that God will return one day to judge this world is simply another reason to praise Him and appreciate all that He has done, is doing and will do for our lives one day.
 - ii) Further, having the confidence that God will "right the wrongs" of this world one day, gives us the strength to get us through our lives as we know them.

15. Psalm 99, title: None
 - a) Like most of the psalms in this group, this one has no title. It is as if the writer just wants us to focus on the text of the psalm itself, and no title is necessary.
 - b) OK John, what is this psalm about and how does it tie to the future day of Jesus' return?
 - i) Glad you asked. The main difference I see between Psalm 98 and 99 is that Psalm 98 focused on the whole world rejoicing over the return of God. Psalm 99 is going to focus on the nation of Israel rejoicing over His return.
 - ii) OK John, if I am not Jewish, why should I read this psalm? Think of this psalm another way: While Psalm 98 discussed how the whole world will benefit from the return of Jesus, Psalm 99 focuses on how the believer benefits from His return.
 - c) OK, let me cut myself off here before I go on too long on a non-title, and start Verse 1.
16. Verse 1: The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. ² Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.
 - a) Well John, you just said Psalm 99 focuses on Israel, yet here in Verse 1 the focus appears to be on the whole world. That is because Verse 1 needs to be read in contrast to Verse 2.
 - i) While the rest of the world (i.e., nonbelievers) may be scared of the idea of the God of the Israelites literally coming back to rule over the world, those of us who trust in our God will be happy about this event.
 - b) I would like to explain the phrase "enthroned between the cherubim". This ties to the ancient Jewish worship of God that His presence was located at the "ark of the covenant" which technically was a box the size of a footlocker. This box was located in the original Jewish tabernacle and later placed in the first Jewish temple. That item is lost to this day although there is lots of speculation and movies made about whatever happened to it.
 - i) Above this "box" was two statues of cherubim. These are high ranking angels that stood guard over this box. The point of this reference is that the "center" of where God was located is at this box-structure and the cherubim guarded that box.
 - ii) That leaves two interesting questions: First of all, if God is everywhere, how could His presence be centered at this box? The point is God is to be approached on His terms and this box represented how and where we approach God in our lives. I'll explain "His terms" in a moment, but essentially, it means "sinless".
 - iii) A second question is "If God is God", why does He need angels to guard Him? The angels are not for His sake but for ours. As I just stated, we can only approach God if we are willing to come to Him "sinless" in terms of desiring forgiveness of our sins. Just as a king has guards around a throne, so these cherubim represent the concept that one does not approach God unless one comes to Him in the manner He chooses, not we choose.
 - iv) OK John, that was a neat little lecture. What does it have to do with this verse? The point here is that when God returns, He will no longer just be a "presence" to those of us who seek Him. He will somehow become visible to the whole world.
 - c) The point of these verses is not just that "God will do all of this one day", but that we as believers will appreciate the fact that the world as we know it now, will not continue forever. To say it another way, our sin-filled world will not continue forever.
 - i) Think of it this way: If God truly loves the world, including all creatures, then He can't let the effect of sin in this world continue forever as it is. God has allowed it to go on for thousands of years among other reasons to show us the effect of sin in this world and to show as many people as possible how corrupt we are without the help of God and therefore, we as individuals and as a whole need a savior.
 - ii) Still, there has to be a specific day where God says in effect, "enough is enough" and He returns. No one knows that specific day except God the Father, nor can anyone calculate that specific date. (See Mark 13:32 or Matthew 24:36.)
 - iii) That specific date is the focus of this psalm and all of these "Royal Psalms".

17. Verse 3: Let them praise your great and awesome name-- he is holy.
- a) OK, who is "them" in this verse? Technically it refers to the Israelites and specifically those Israelites who trust in the God of the bible. In today's context, I would argue it refers to anyone and everyone who trusts in the God of the Bible.
 - b) The text of this verse also emphasizes "God is holy". OK, what does that mean?
 - i) It means that God is perfect. It means that He Himself never violates any of the sins listed anywhere in the bible. It also includes the idea of being "set apart". The example I like to use is like having a special set of dishes one has for specific person. The idea we "set apart" God from everyone else because He is perfect.
 - c) This gets back to the concept of why we praise God. One reason we do praise Him is simply because He is perfect in every way. His timing is always perfect. His ways and His decisions are always perfect. Yes, but why does He allow so much suffering in this world? I can't explain every bad thing. I just trust in Romans 8:28 that says in effect that all things work for God for those who trust Him.
 - d) OK John, let's say Jesus does not return for another 500 years to pick a number at random.
 - i) How will I benefit if everyone I know and myself are not around at that time? The answer is it is not for the sake of any specific individual, but for the world. We pray for this because we don't want the effects of sin to go on forever in this world.
 - a) That is why we pray "your kingdom come" as part of "The Lord's prayer".
 - ii) In summary, to consider such an event helps us to deal with the pain caused by sin in this world knowing that the effects of sin will not go on forever.
 - e) Now that I've now beaten that point to death, ☺ I can now move on to Verse 4.
18. Verse 4: The King is mighty, he loves justice-- you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right.
- a) So who is the King in Verse 4? Is it referring to God the Father or the Jesus (the Messiah)? One could argue it either way. The reason God is called the "King" in this verse is because we Christians live in a kingdom where we should honor God as our king.
 - b) I once heard a great lecture about different types of government systems: The key question is, is it better to live in a kingdom, a democracy, or ruled by a large group? While a democracy gives more representation to different people, a kingdom is the most efficient in terms of getting things done. The problem with kingdoms is corrupt kings.
 - i) However, if there were a perfect king over us, it would be the quickest and most efficient way of administrating justice and laws. This verse is a prayer request for "the perfect king" to come rule over the earth. That is what religious Jews call "The Messiah" and that is what most Christians believe Jesus does when He returns.
 - ii) Does this mean our current leadership is bad? Of course not. There are good and bad people in every form of leadership. The point here is we pray for a day when "perfect leadership" would come and reign over this world, as God promises.
 - c) This leads me to the rest of Verse 4: "in Jacob you have done what is just and right."
 - i) When you see the word "Jacob", know that it is a way of describing the nation of Israel. It is saying in effect that God took somebody who was far from perfect (to put it mildly) and used that person, well because God wanted to use that person.
 - ii) To put it another way, this verse is saying that God has established a group of people who are His witnesses to the world. Today, that group of witnesses is all of us who trust in Jesus as both Lord and Savior.
 - iii) OK, John, we established the "who" of this verse (nation of Israel). Now tell us what does the verse mean by "just and right"?
 - a) It is not saying they or even "us" have done a great job being that witness, just that it was a "good thing" that God set aside a group of people in order for God to show us that He exists and here is what He expects from people in order to acknowledge Him and be pleasing to Him with our lives.

19. Verse 5: Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.
- a) Sometimes I worry that my speeches get me off track. Then I look at the surrounding verses and realize everything is ok. The last verse in effect says that God has established a group of people on this planet for the purpose of showing the world that He exists.
 - i) OK, other than the fact we are to worship God, what should we do with that bit of information? This verse says we exalt God, which means to honor Him as God.
 - b) Know that the word translated "footstool" here is a way of describing the planet earth.
 - i) Why would God want to refer to the earth as His footstool?
 - a) The point is not that God kicks back and rests His feet on the earth.
 - b) That word "footstool" implies rest. The idea is that God has rested from creating the earth, as we currently know it to exist.
 - c) The last part of the verse says that God is holy. To remind all of us again, the idea of holy simply means that we "set apart" God as something special.
20. Verse 6: Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them.
- a) It would probably help at this point to explain why, and why not the psalmist decided to mention these three historical figures (Moses, Aaron and Samuel) at this point in the psalm. In other words, why not mention say, Abraham or David in this verse?
 - b) The point of these three people is that all of them worked as "priests" between God and the Nation of Israel. A priest is one who intercedes between God and mankind.
 - i) Since Moses is the one who God first gave all of the laws to, he in effect was the first priest between the nation of Israel and God.
 - ii) Moses' brother Aaron was literally picked to be the first Jewish top (high) priest. Therefore, Aaron also fit into this category of being a priest.
 - c) There is nothing positive said about the priesthood until Samuel came along many centuries after Moses.
 - i) The point was not that these are perfect men. The point is these people agreed to do what God told them to do. Yes, the bible records mistakes that each of them made, but for the most part, they are all obedient to their duties as being priests.
 - ii) The point for us is that if and when God calls on us to do specific tasks, we too are obedient to that calling. OK John, how do I know when God is calling me to do something specific? I usually find it comes from something "we just can't stand not doing" and God leads us down the path He desires for our lives.
21. Verse 7: He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.
- a) If you recall from my last lesson, I discussed the fact that whenever God the Father would appear in the bible, the text usually mentions clouds. The idea is clouds (think fog) make it hard for anyone to see. The point is even if we grasp the concept of God speaking to us (say through His word), we can't fully grasp who God is or what He is capable of doing. That is why God is always portrayed as "foggy" in the bible.
 - i) This little speech about clouds leads me to this verse. This verse acknowledges in effect that God spoke directly to Moses. God gave Moses a list of laws He wanted the Israelites to obey. Those are the laws and principals taught in the first five books of the Old Testament.
 - b) OK John, I need one of your "Christians are not under the law" comments here. If God gave them and us these laws, how is that relevant to us if we are not under the law?
 - i) The Old Testament laws are not bad things. They are best understood in the light of the New Testament. For example, Jesus sacrifice on our behalf fulfilled the requirements of obedience on our behalf. Still, the laws are worth studying as they do teach us principals of how God is to be worshipped and how we are to treat our fellow believers and even how to treat other people in general.

22. Verse 8: O LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.
- a) Verse 8 starts by saying "You answered them". My question is, what was the question?
 - b) In other words, if God answered, them, what were they asking Him in the first place?
 - i) The answer is in the rest of the verse. It says in effect that God was a forgiving entity. That means the Israelites wanted to know how to have forgiveness of their sins and what to do when they "messed up"?
 - ii) Obviously they didn't grasp the idea of a Messiah who would suffer for their sins. The point is God set up a whole system of sacrifices in order to have forgiveness and a renewed relationship with God. That last sentence I just wrote is a good summary of the entire book of Leviticus.
 - c) The point here is that God does forgive our sins but not because we deserve forgiveness, but just because He loves us. He wants to forgive us when we take the trouble to realize God's way of doing things was right and ours was wrong. The Israelites realized they were sinful before God, but also realized they could have God's forgiveness by going through their rituals of confess and sacrifice.
 - i) In effect, that ritual has not changed today. God still wants us to confess our sins when we realize we have sinned. There is still sacrifice for sin, but Jesus Himself was that sacrifice once and for all for those of us who trust in that sacrifice.
 - d) The verse ends with the comment of God punishing our misdeeds. The point is God doesn't allow us to get away with things. To put it another way, He loves us too much to leave us alone. Therefore, out of His love, it is necessary at times to punish us when we are disobedient to Him. If anything that punishment is designed to drive us back to Him.
23. Verse 9: Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.
- a) This psalm ends with the request for us believers to worship at "His holy mountain". Assuming that means Jerusalem, does that mean we have to travel there? No.
 - i) The point is we make the effort to seek Him where "He" is, not where we are.
 - ii) To put it another way, we are to seek God on His terms, not ours. His terms are about coming to Him admitting that sin is wrong and it is our desire to avoid sin as much as possible in our lives and trusting in Him guiding our lives.
 - b) In summary this psalm was originally written for believing Israelites, but it can easily be expanded to include all believers in God. The point is that God does desire we exalt Him (seek Him, worship Him) as God and make the time to do so.
 - i) Yes God will literally rule over the whole earth one day. I've beaten that point to death over the past few lessons. In the meantime, we have to remember that He is in charge, He does rule over the lives of believers now and one day He will rule over all people whether they accept that premise or not.
 - c) The psalm ends with another reminder that God is holy. Again, the idea for us is that we set God apart as something special. I have to admit sometimes when I am busy, I will pray while I am doing other things. If you are praying while you are driving, that is ok, but please of course drive safely. My point is that God is not to be shared with other activities. If we do set apart God as "holy", then we are to do just that. It is about taking the time to think of Him as being "God" and treating Him as such and taking that seriously.
 - i) That word "seriously" is as good a summary of how we worship as I can think of. The point is we should never take worship lightly. If God is in charge, then we should honor Him as such and pray to Him as such.
 - d) OK, I'm at the end of page 10 and I still have one more psalm to go. The good news is that it is only five verses long. This is the last of these "praise God" psalms.

24. Psalm 100, title: A psalm. For giving grateful praise.
 - a) It is best if I describe the purpose of this psalm first. It is in effect a summary of this series of praise psalms that started back in Psalm 93. This psalm says in effect, "OK by now we all know lots of reasons why we should be grateful to God for our lives. So with that thought in mind, let us actually worship God and give Him praise.
 - i) In this short psalm, we actually praise God for what He has done for us.
 - ii) That is why the title is, what it is: A statement about giving praise to God.
 - iii) The title also mentions this is a psalm, which simply means the writer believed it was inspired by God for us to contemplate the words as we use it to praise God.
 - b) OK, enough explanations about the psalm. Let's start Verse 1 and get rolling.
25. Verse 1: Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
 - a) Like many of the recent psalms, this one is a plea for the whole earth to praise God. Yes, this psalm fits our "millennial" theme when all of the world will acknowledge Him as God. I also see this psalm as a cry out to any and all people who do believe in Him to shout out for joy now. Ok then, let's stand up and give a shout for God right now. ☺
 - b) Let me discuss the word "joy" for a moment. I have been using that word a lot the past few lessons and I figured it might be time to remind all of us what it means.
 - i) I separate the term joy from happiness, although they are similar. When I think of happy, I think of one's circumstances at the moment. If we win a big prize, we would be happy for the moment. Joy is deeper. Joy is a sense that everything is going to be ok, despite the circumstances of the moment. Joy is knowing that life in the long run is going to work for the believer no matter what is on our mind.
 - c) This leads me back to this verse. We shouldn't shout for joy to God because we are in a good mood. We should shout for joy to God, well, because He deserves it. We shout to joy to God because no matter what happens in our lives, we can have confidence that we will have a wonderful and eternal relationship with Him whatever our present situation.
 - i) Bottom line: Don't shout for joy when the mood is right, do it "anyway".
26. Verse 2: Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.
 - a) Verse 2 is essentially saying, be in a good mood when singing joyfully to God.
 - b) In a matter of hours I am off to the funeral that I referred to earlier in this lesson. For the family that lost the loved one, this is a difficult time. Yet at the same time, they can have joy knowing that their loved one is now in heaven. Yes that family is going to have to adjust to him being gone, but they and us can still have joy despite the circumstances.
 - i) That in effect is the point of this verse. In the best or worst of times, we can still have joy in our hearts not because the "times are happy", but because we trust in God to watch over our lives and guide us through whatever we are dealing with.
 - c) As my wife once taught me, "fake it until you make it". If you can't feel the joy because of one's circumstances, one should simply do their best to express one's joy despite one's feelings at the moment. When one makes that effort to express one's joy, one's mood does improve. That is the ideas behind this expression of "fake it until you make it".
 - i) In the meantime, the psalmist is asking us to be glad and come to God with joy. As I prepare for the event I am off to, I want to keep that thought in mind.
27. Verse 3: Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
 - a) Think about the word "know" to start this verse. The idea is not to hope or have doubts that God is God, but to know that fact. Through the last two lessons I have been posing the question of "how do we know all of this stuff is true?"
 - i) The answer is simply to know it. The evidence is there in the bible if we need the proof. If you have been a Christian for a good while, we can simply know it by trusting in Him and letting Him reveal Himself to us. That is how we "know".

- b) Now that I've explained the word, "know", let's talk about what we should know:
 - i) First is that "God is God". I've beaten that point to death so I'll move on.
 - ii) Next in the verse is the concept that God made us. It is more than acknowledging that God creating us. It is accepting the fact we belong to Him forever. If we are "one of His", then we should act like it. That includes the idea of taking time to worship Him, study what He wants us to study and finally to live the way He wants us to live. That is the essential point of this verse.
 - iii) Finally the verse says "sheep of His pasture". The idea that we are like sheep in that sheep easily wander away from where they should go. In a similar fashion, we as believers can easily wander away from God wants us to go in life.
 - iv) The verse then says "His pasture". The point is this world was created by God and ultimately will be ruled by Him. Therefore, we are grazing on "His land" whether we realize that fact or not.
- 28. Verse 4: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.
 - a) Yes the term "gates and courts" does refer to the temple that stood in Jerusalem at the time this psalm was written. It may even refer to a future temple that will stand in Jerusalem at the time when Jesus comes back. The point for us now is that wherever and whenever we approach God, He wants us to have a good attitude while doing so.
 - i) The point is there is no excuse not to praise God. There are always things to be grateful for, and there is also benefit to our own health and our own lives when we take the time and make the effort to praise Him. To put it another way, to "fake it until we make it" does benefit us, even if we don't feel it right now.
- 29. Verse 5: For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.
 - a) There are always going to be people who see all of the misery of this world and make statements like "God either doesn't exist or if He does, He doesn't care".
 - i) It is statements like that one which have caused people through the ages to create all sorts of false gods that they can worship because they think that those created gods somehow care more than the true God.
 - b) The truth of course is the opposite. As this final verse of these praise psalms states, God is good, and His love for people endures forever.
 - i) OK John, how do you explain all of the horrible tragedies of this life and agree with this verse? I can't. I don't know why God allows all of the bad things of this world to happen. All I do know is that the only way this life would ever be "fair", is if there is a single God who is in control of the world and ultimately rights the wrongs of this world. In other words, I would rather go through life trusting in such a God than to doubt His existence in the first place.
 - c) In truth, I read all of the bible stories about people's encounters with the true God and I believe they are real. I see my own encounters with God over my lifetime and I accept them as reality. Yes I have also seen a lot of horrible things happen and I can't explain all of that. I just know that God is good, His love does endure forever and He is always faithful through our good and bad times to all generations of people.
 - d) On that happy note, it is time to wrap up this lesson.
- 30. Let's pray: Father, we come to You with joy in our hearts because we know that You exist, You love us and want the best for our lives. Help us to use the time you have given us to make a difference for You. We can't explain all that happens in this world. We just live by faith that You are in control and all things happen ultimately for Your glory. Be with us and help us to grow in our trust in You and be a good witness to others around us of Your existence, Your love and Your desire to see people want to be with You forever. We ask this in Jesus' name Amen