

Psalm Introduction, and Psalms 1 and 2 – John Karmelich

1. Over the past couple of weeks, God has made it very clear to me, that the next book He wants me to take on is the Psalms. I can't tell you why that is true; I just know that it is true. It is probably best if I start by explaining some of the challenges that await us in these studies.
 - a) There are 150 different psalms in the bible. King David wrote roughly half of them. Note that the Psalms written by David are not in sequential order, but are spread out through the book. There are two other authors attributed to about a dozen psalms each and a few who are given credit for one psalm each. There are many who we don't know the author.
 - b) So given the different authors, how and when was this book organized? We don't know. Given the date of the latest psalms, they were most likely compiled around 400BC, give or a hundred years or so.
 - i) The psalms where we know who the author was, is based on what is written right below the psalm number. We will talk about that issue of psalm titles as we go through this book. For now, just know that the Book of Psalms was put together at the latest, several centuries before Jesus was born.
 - c) Another issue in teaching the Psalms is the lack of a central theme. When I usually teach a book of the bible, I start off writing in effect, "Here is where we left off in the last lesson, and here is where we are going in this lesson. Psalms does not have that type of flow. There are 150 Psalms and that in effect, means there are 150 separate topics. Therefore this study will have a different sort of "flow" to it. How that will work? I don't know yet.
 - d) This leads to another question: How fast (or how detailed) should one study the Psalms? To give you the range of possibilities, one of my favorite commentators (Chuck Missler) did all 150 in about 15 one-hour lessons. Another of my favorite commentators who wrote in the 1800's (Charles Spurgeon) wrote a seven-volume encyclopedia. Hopefully, I study them in enough depth to make this study useful, but also to summarize them at a quick enough pace that we go through this book no faster or slower than when I covered any of the other major books of the bible.
2. The next thing to discuss is what the Psalms are and what they are not.
 - a) The essential idea of the Psalms is that it is a book of praises to God. That does not mean that Psalm 1 blesses God for this reason and Psalm 2 blesses God for that reason.
 - b) One learns a lot about God's nature and what He expects of believers in the Psalms.
 - c) The Psalms also contain prophecy. When Jesus rose from the dead, one of the things he did is explain how the Old Testament spoke of His life and He specifically mentioned the Psalms as part of those predictions about His life. (See Luke 24:44.) My point here is that the Psalms teach us aspects of Jesus life, death and purpose as we go through them.
 - d) Back to what the Psalms "are": It is a collection of poems that is part of the Old Testament. There are a total of 150 Psalms and they are broken up into 5 groups that are called books. We do know that most or all of the Psalms were originally set to music so they can be sung. That music is long gone and today we don't know how the original tunes went.
 - e) So why should we study the Psalms? In short because they teach us what God expects of us as believers and gives us examples and reasons for praising God as our redeemer.
 - i) In other words the "smaller" issue is the fact that God created us. The "bigger" issue is that God has made a way for us to live with Him forever.
3. The next issue to bring up is writing style and organization.
 - a) When we think of poetry in English, we think of phrases were the last word or the last syllable rhymes with the last syllable of the next phrase or the next sentence. The idea is that poems "connect" thoughts because of the rhyming factors written in the poems. That is not the case here as the Psalms were written by Jews in Hebrew over 2,000 years ago.

- b) Jewish poetry has a different concept. The first concept in a Psalm is somehow connected to the next concept in the Psalm. In other words, the ending syllable in each phrase does not rhyme in the original Hebrew or in English.
 - i) When I say connected, it can mean that one thought may be similar to the next thought in that it may be a continuing discussion of a topic. In other words, there is a lot of comparison and contrasting ideas in the Psalms.
4. Finally, I want to talk a little about the structure of the poems. As I started to think about this topic I was reminded of a scene from the 1989 movie "The Dead Poet's Society".
- a) There is a key scene in that movie where Robin Williams played a professor who teaches on the topic of English poetry. On his first day of a new school year, He told the students to open their poetry textbook. Chapter 1 of that textbook gave a detailed section on how to "break down" poetry by style. Robin Williams tells the class to rip Chapter 1 out of the book and throw it away.
 - i) The point the teacher (Robin Williams) was making is that poetry should be "felt" and not studied for its structural significance. In other words, one cannot sense what the author is trying to get across by breaking down poems by structure.
 - b) This leads me back to the Psalms. One can analyze the Psalms by "this or that type of writing structure". When one does that, one misses the beauty of whatever message the writer is trying to get across.
 - c) Given that fact, I want to minimize structural arguments and focus on what the author is trying to get across in each Psalm. As usual, these studies will be filled with "background notes". Since they were written roughly 2,500 years ago, sometimes explanations are needed as to the meaning of the text. That does not take away from the structure of the Psalm, but simply helps to explain what is being said.
 - d) I am going to analyze each Psalm, not to break down the beauty of the text, but to help understand what the author is trying to communicate. What I hope is no one (myself included) misses is the beauty of each Psalm and what God wants to say to us.
5. Before I start, I want to share a moment in a courtroom experience some time back.
- a) For those who don't know, I make a living as a real estate appraiser. Occasionally I have to go to court to testify about the value of some particular property. One time, while I was sitting in the courtroom, I was watching the attorneys of another case while waiting for court to be in session. What caught my attention is that one of the attorneys was reading a small book of the Psalms while waiting for the judge to enter the room.
 - i) This attorney who I'm pretty sure was an Orthodox Jew, was, as best I could tell using that spare moment to remind himself that there is a God, He is in charge and no matter what happens at that court room on that day, God is still there working.
 - b) My point in sharing this story is that as we study the Psalms remember God is still working in the background of our lives just as He was working in the lives of the authors that lived roughly 2,500 years ago. Psalms are to be applied to our lives, not just studied.
6. This leads to a quick (and hopefully, my final) point about why we should study the Psalms:
- a) My hope for everyone reading this lesson is that we "personalize" the Psalms. I want all of us to make the Psalms part of our lives. Yes, they are praises to God, but they should be your praises and my praises to God, and not just the author's praises. When studying some aspect of how God works in the Psalms (there is lots of that), the key is to study how that aspect works in our lives today and not the lives of people, who are long gone.
 - b) The reason we study the Psalms, like studying all the other books of the bible is to learn how to draw closer to God. God wants an intimate relationship with each one of us. Part of that relationship includes praising Him and part of it is simply understanding just who God is and how understanding He desires to work in our lives.
 - c) OK, with that happy introduction completed, ☺ lets take a look at Psalm #1.

7. Psalm 1 can best be thought of as an "introduction or preface" Psalm.
- a) The theme of this Psalm is about the proper way for people to act toward God.
 - b) My title for Psalm 1 is simply, "How to live the way God wants us to live". The Psalm is saying in effect, "If you want to please God here is what you should be doing and if you want to ignore God, here is how you should act.
 - c) There is a specific reason why Psalm 1 happens to be the first Psalm. It is to teach us the proper attitude we should have about studying all of the Psalms. In that sense, this Psalm is the perfect introduction or "preface" to all the Psalms.
 - d) To put Psalm 1 in perspective of all the Psalms, if we are going to spend time studying what God expects of us, we have to start with a proper attitude about our relationship with God. That is why the first Psalm focuses on our behavior and not about any particular aspect of God's attributes.
 - e) To put it another way, before we can study what God expects for our lives, first we have to understand the proper attitude of a believer in God. That is the focus of Psalm 1, and that is I believe why this Psalm is the first of the 150.
8. Psalm 1, Verse 1: (Here we go. ☺) Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
- a) If you recall from my introduction, over half of the psalms list the author or the purpose of each particular psalm before Verse 1. For neither Psalm 1 nor Psalm 2, no such title exists. It isn't until we get to Psalm 3 in the next lesson, where we have any Psalm titles.
 - b) Most English bibles break up Verse 1 so each phrase is a separate line. In other words Verse 1 reads, "Blessed is the man (new line) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked (new line) or stand in the way of sinners (new line) or sit in the seat of mockers."
 - i) As I go through the Psalms, I plan on saving space by stating entire lines of the Psalms in "straight text" to save space. As one actually reads the Psalms without any commentary, one should be aware of these breaks, as it helps us to properly break down the Psalm and understand how God wants us to look at that Psalm.
 - c) OK, onto verse one of this psalm itself: Psalm 1 starts with "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked".
 - i) What does "blessed" mean? The general idea is one of happiness. Does that mean if we do exactly what God wants us to do, we will never be sad? I don't think so.
 - ii) To me, a better way to look at that expression of "blessed" is to think of joyful.
 - a) When I think of "happy", I think of one's circumstances at the moment. For example, if one receives a big sum of money one is usually very happy.
 - b) The word "joyful" describes a choice one can make at any given moment in time. No matter what is going on in our lives at any given moment, one can choose to be miserable or one can choose to be joyful.
 - c) That doesn't mean that when things are going wrong we should smile and laugh. It means we understand God is in charge, and He is going to work out our problems for His glory. Despite whatever we have to deal with at the moment, we can trust God to help us through that situation. That is "joyful"; it is about being blessed even when things are "falling apart".
 - d) This reminds me of a quote by Ray Stedman, who said in effect, Christians are always joyful, always in trouble and always looking to God to get them through their life! The idea is Christians should always be joyful knowing that we have a great future despite whatever we are going through in life.
 - iii) This leads us back to the Psalm itself. This Psalm teaches us how to be blessed in life. Note that the topic is not salvation, but how to be "blessed". Given the fact that we should want joy in our life, let us go learn how we should be blessed.

- d) OK, now that we understand blessed (or "joyful"), let's go to the next phrase that explains how we are blessed. It is, "the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked".
- i) First of all, note that the Hebrew word translated "man" here refers to mankind, in that either a man or a woman can be blessed by doing what God says.
 - ii) The text says, a blessed man (or woman) "does not walk in the council of the wicked". The first thing I wondered is "how do you tell if you are walking by the council of those who are wicked? Is there a sign on the door of a room that says, "Beware, this room is full of wicked council?" I've never seen one of those. ☺
 - a) Verse 2 (coming up) answers that question by saying in effect the blessed person study's God's word. The way one knows one is receiving "wicked" council (i.e., bad advice) is by comparing it to God's word. Therefore one needs to study God's word in order to recognize bad council.
 - iii) OK, does this mean I have to really know my bible in order to be saved? No. This verse does not say the "saved person" shall do this or that. It says the "blessed" man (or woman) shall do this. In other words, if you want to live a joy filled life, one learns God's word, if for no other reason than to avoid bad advice.
 - iv) Sometimes bad advice can be "blatant". If someone tells us to go steal something, instinctively we know that is wrong and we don't have to do a lot of bible digging to understand that. The problem is advice often more subtle. Bad advice may include "five good things and one thing that God would not approve of". The key is studying God's word to know what it is He wants us to do and what to avoid. That is the first step of being blessed by God.
 - v) I will also add that God can talk to us through prayer and godly council when difficult situations arise. If one is not sure what to do in a given situation, pray about, study His word and seek biblically based council. That can help to avoid bad council as described in this verse.
- e) The rest of Verse 1 says, "Blessed is the man who does not...stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers".
- i) The first "negative" of Verse 1 was to avoid ungodly council. We are now finished with that point and are moving on to the second "negative" thing to watch out for. The second negative is to not stand in the way of sinners. Again, in life there is no sign on the door saying, "Beware, this room is full of sinners". It is always a matter of knowing God's word in order to know what it is we have to avoid.
 - ii) The basic point is to not do something that is sinful. In order to avoid sinful activities, one also has to understand what is sinful as well as we must know our own weaknesses. There may be an activity that is acceptable for another Christian to do, but it may be unacceptable for you or I to do that same thing.
- f) The final phrase is "seat of mockers". One thing I have learned in life is when a person doesn't care about God's way of living, they will usually mock God and mock those who take the bible seriously. (Notice I said seriously and not literally. There are parts of the bible, particularly in the Psalms that are poetic. However, we should take it seriously.)
- i) Some people read verse 1 as a progression. They see it as starting off bad, by taking the advice of ungodly people, then progressing to the "way" sinners live and the final step is mocking the way God wants us to live. Whether or not this first verse is meant as a progression, the important thing is that God is giving us a list of things to avoid if we wish to live a life that is blessed by Him.
- g) Let me end verse 1 on a tougher note: Suppose those who want us to turn from God are people we have to be "next to" on a regular basis. We may have to hear such people speak, but we don't have to follow their bad advice. The idea of not listening to somebody does not mean being rude, but simply to not take the advice when one knows such advice is not what God desires for our life at the moment.

9. Verse 2: But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- a) Verse 2 should be read as a contrast to Verse 1.
 - i) Verse 1 gave us advice on what to avoid in order to be blessed by God.
 - ii) Verse 2 has no negatives, and tells us what to do in order to be blessed.
 - iii) If that is true, why aren't the verses reversed? Why not start Verse 1 with "do this and be blessed" and then Verse 2 indicate the negative aspects of disobedience? The reason the verses are in this order is because that is how life works. We have to learn what to avoid in order know what is the "blessed" life through God.
 - iv) In other words, God rescues us out of this world. We have to have recognition of what a sinful in order to know we have to avoid.
 - b) OK, onto Verse 2 itself. The point of this verse is that in order for a believer in God to be "blessed" (again, think joyful), one should "delight in God's law".
 - i) So, does that mean I have to read all of the Old Testament laws and then laugh out loud with delight over them? ☺ Well, not exactly. The idea is to spend regular time daily in God's word.
 - a) This verse does not mean we spend all day and night studying God's word. It means that God's word is a part of our life on a daily basis.
 - b) God knows that we still have a life to live. Learning to balance one's time between time alone with Him and the other requirements is a constant trick to learn to balance.
 - c) The underlying point of this verse is not to spend, say exactly an hour every morning and an hour every night thinking of God. The point of this verse is that we should "carve out" part of our day for God and then He promises not only to bless that time with Him, but bless the rest of our day when we do set out time for Him.
 - c) Finally, let me give a few thoughts on "meditates day and night".
 - i) This does not mean one sits in a lotus position thinking about God's word. ☺
 - ii) The idea is when we regularly spend time in prayer and time in God's word, it affects the decisions we make as we just then "naturally" want to please God.
 - iii) As we study God's word, the important thing is to think about what it means. The biggest mistake Christians make when we study God's word is often we just try to get through it as if they are forced to read "x" number of chapters per day.
 - a) What is more important than just reading is to think about what the text is saying and think about how it applies to one's life. That "is" meditation.
 - iv) Occasionally, I get e-mail's from people who are stuck on some biblical point. My first thought about such people is "Whether or not my advice is good or bad, at least that person is thinking about God's word and how it should apply to their life." If one is taking the time to contemplate the meaning of a biblical passage, one is on the right path in life. God always blesses such time spent with Him.
10. Verse 3: He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
- a) Verse 3 is still focusing on the positive aspects of those who stick close to God and care about pleasing Him with their lives.
 - b) Such a person who cares about pleasing God is like a tree that is planted near streams of water. Think of it this way: A tree that is next to a number of water streams should be healthy all year round as its roots can reach toward those streams for its growth.
 - c) The best description I read about this tree is that it is an "ever-green" (always green).
 - i) In other words, the tree could be facing strong wind, heavy rain, thunder or dry conditions. Because that tree has roots into a number of streams, it is always healthy, which is the reference to "evergreen".

- d) OK, John, what does that tree analogy have to do with my life? Does God promise that we as Christians will always be happy trees? Not exactly. I like to think of this tree illustration, as whatever life throws at me, I can still be dependant upon God to get me through that situation. That is why I like the word "streams" (as in plural). In other words, I have God's word to guide me through life, I have a relationship with Him through my prayer life and I have good Christian friends who I can turn to for help.
 - i) That is how I personally see the "multiple streams".
 - e) The verse ends with the concept that if one sticks close to God, one will prosper.
 - i) Does that mean one is guaranteed financial success in life if one sticks to God's word? Not exactly. It means that one will make a difference for God and one's life will have purpose if we live to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) The idea of prospering should also help us through the difficult times in life. During such times God is saying to us in effect, "It's ok, I am working out a plan in your life for my glory, so trust me, through such a time."
 - iii) On that happy note, we can move on to Verse 4.
11. Verse 4: Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- a) Verses 4 and 5 go back to describe the lifestyle of those live in a way that is not pleasing to God. This is not about trying to please God and failing. This is about not caring about pleasing God in the first place. Verses 4 and 5 are describing those who are only interesting in pleasing themselves and do not care about God's will for their lives.
 - b) The key point of Verse 4 is that such people are like a worthless piece of chaff.
 - i) Let me explain: When one grows wheat out of ground, there is a covering over top part of the wheat called chaff. That chaff is so light that when wheat is thrown in the air in a mild wind, the chaff blows away. The purpose of chaff is to protect the wheat when it is growing, but when it is grown it simply "blows off".
 - c) OK, so why are wicked people like chaff? The idea is that God is saying to such people, "Your lives are so bad, that you might as well be carried away by the wind as you have lived in a way that has not made a difference for me (God) in your lifetime."
 - i) The type of person who has lived their life in a way where they only care about pleasing themselves is like chaff. For example, a person who steals or murders is interested in preserving their own lives and do not care about hurting others.
 - d) One has to remember that all people, even those who commit their lives to serving God make mistakes. The difference is the "godly" person feels remorse when they mess up, not for the sake of punishment, but because they are interested in pleasing God.
 - i) The wicked don't care about God so when they sin, their only fear is being punished for what they did wrong. In the end, they become like "worthless chaff".
 - e) This leads us to verse five. The point here is that if one lives a life in a way where one has no interest in pleasing God, such a person will not "stand in judgment" before God.
 - i) Let me put it this way: We as believers in God do want to face Him when we die. I believe we have rewards in heaven based on how we made a difference for Him. The wicked will be "blown out of court" so to speak, due to their wickedness.
 - ii) Whether we think about it or not, all people will live forever. We can choose to live for ourselves in this life, and the outcome of that choice is we will be "blown away" before God. The other choice is to seek forgiveness of our sins and trust in God's payment for our sins and we then get to live with Him forever.
 - iii) The underlying point of this whole Psalm is in effect, "Do you want to live for God forever or do you want to live for yourself forever?" If we choose to live to make a difference for God, we live forever in heaven. If we choose to live to please ourselves, the natural outcome of such a choice is an empty life, and in effect, God gives such people that choice forever by giving them an "empty eternity".

12. Verse 6: For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
- a) Speaking of "eternity", Verse 6 (the final verse of this Psalm) gives us the outcome of our choice that we make in life, whether to live for our own desires or to live to please God.
 - b) Verse 6 is saying in effect, "If we have asked God to take over our lives, we have to trust that He is working in our lives and He is there, watching over us."
 - i) That is a principal to keep in mind when things are going wrong. It is that no matter how bad things are, or even how good things are, God is there and He still wants to guide us through our life.
 - c) The main point of this verse is that if one chooses to ignore God all of one's life, one will eternally perish. The good news is that God allows "u-turns" at any point in one's life. If that is true, why can't I live a "selfish life" now, and then turn to God later?
 - i) The short answer is if one waits until the last moment to turn to God, then one will miss out on all the blessings God has for one's life during this lifetime.
 - ii) The other part of that answer is we never know when our time is up and we may not get that opportunity to make that "u-turn".
 - iii) This is also why I spend a lot of time praying for people I know who have not turned to God. I understand that He allows "u-turns" and I pray that God changes people's hearts so that they don't have to spend eternity away from His presence.
 - d) On that happy note, ☺ we finished Psalm 1 and we can actually move on to Psalm 2.
13. Psalm 2, Verse 1: Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
- a) Like Psalm 1, there is no comment before Verse 1 as to who the author is. However, Psalm 2 is unique where the New Testament tells us that King David was the author of that Psalm. (See Acts 2:34). This psalm is known as a prophetic psalm. (That is, it teaches us things about Jesus many centuries before He became a man.) Even those who are religious Jews believe that Psalm 2 talks about a coming Messiah (an everlasting King).
 - b) Psalm 1 focused on the proper attitude believers need to have toward looking to God and seeing people's destiny's through "God's eyes". Psalm 2 continues that idea of looking to God, but the perspective of Psalm 2 is seeing things from God's perspective. Psalm 1 focuses on life from "our eyes", Psalm 2 focuses on life through God's perspective.
 - c) It is probably best at this point to start talking about the first verse of this second Psalm.
 - i) In this opening verse, it describes the "nations" conspiring against God.
 - ii) Does that mean that all nations at all times conspire against God? No it does not.
 - iii) What this verse is saying is there are times where groups of people literally get together in effect to say, "We can have a great life without the help or influence of God in our lives." The first example of this was the "Tower of Babel" story as told in Genesis 11:1-9. The idea is about any organized effort against the God.
 - iv) In summary this Psalm is teaching about the outcome of any and all organized rebellions against God, whether such people realize that outcome or not.
14. Verse 2: The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ³ "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."
- a) Verse 2 continues the thought of a group of people attempting to organize and carry out a rebellion against the God of the Bible and the "Anointed One".
 - i) Both Christians and Jews understand that the Anointed One is a reference to the Messiah (or "Christ" from the Greek) who will one day rule the world.
 - ii) For the Christian, this is describing Jesus at His second coming. For the religious Jew, it is describing the future Messiah (eternal king) to come and rule the world.
 - b) Let me paraphrase Verse 2: The verse is saying in effect, "We (those in rebellion against God) don't want to live in a world where He is in charge or live in a world where Jesus will rule over me. We reject the bible and what it teaches about how to live our life."

- c) I have to admit, it seems silly to me, to picture a bunch of people getting organized with the purpose of rebelling against God. If God is big enough to create the world, it seems silly to me that people think they can successfully rebel against Him.
 - i) Such people are not rebelling so much against the idea that God exists, but are rebelling against the idea of the God of the Bible ruling over their lives. Think of all the multitudes of people who say in effect, "there is no God". They are the ones who whether they realize it or not, are rebelling against God ruling over their lives. It equally applies to those who do believe in some other god and then say in effect, "I don't want the God of the bible to rule over my life".
 - ii) I have always taken the view that (literal) hell is giving people what they want for eternity. The concept of hell is God saying in effect, "OK, you don't want to live with Me? Fine, I will give you what you want forever." C.S. Lewis is famous (among many other things) for the quote that says, "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside", which is a reference to this concept about people who have chosen to rebel against God have chosen to live with that choice for eternity.
 - d) To understand Verse 3, it is best to think about what Jesus said about "yokes".
 - i) A yoke is a wooden collar put around an ox to guide that ox while it works. A yoke was custom made for each ox to wear around its neck.
 - ii) Jesus said, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light". (Matthew 11:30, NIV.) What Jesus meant by that is that if one chooses to follow Him, then one has to accept the idea that God is guiding us. At the same time, Jesus is saying in effect, that "yoke" we wear will not hurt, and that yoke burden of being directed by God is not heavy. That yoke is there for our own good to guide us how to live.
 - iii) This leads us back to Verse 3. Those who choose to rebel against God are saying in effect, "I don't want God's yoke around my neck". To put it another way, "I don't want to live my life guided by God. I want to live it my way".
 - iv) One has to understand that God does not force us to do anything. If one chooses to rebel against God, He says in effect, "OK, if that is what you want, I won't stop you. However, if you make that choice at any given moment in one's life, one has to live with the consequences of that choice."
 - v) This is also why the concept of repentance is so important. When we realize our mistakes of turning from God, all He asks of us, is to realize we made a mistake and we are willing to turn from that mistake and live a life pleasing to Him. That is what repentance is all about.
 - vi) That point is relevant to this verse in that some people willfully choose to rebel against God and have no interest in repentance. That is the point of Verse 3.
15. Verse 4: The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.
- a) The idea of God "laughing" is not to say that God is laughing at the consequences of sin. God is not a human who is physically capable of laughing. The point in this verse is a "metaphor" (i.e., it is speaking symbolically).
 - b) The idea of God laughing is about those who choose to organize any and all types of rebellion against Him and His will for mankind.
 - c) This verse saying in effect, "Your (mankind's) attempt to rebel against Me (God) is such a waste of time, I laugh at your attempt to organize such a rebellion."
 - i) So does that mean if our leaders of our society are getting away from the biblical principals of how to live, we should be quiet and "just wait for God to laugh"? No.
 - ii) We should always be willing to take a stand for God and say what is the right thing to do. However, we still have to obey the laws of our land and one has to carefully consider how we are to "rebel" and how we are to obey our leaders.
 - iii) The point here is not about how we react, but about how God reacts to rebellion. The point is God in effect, "laughs at mankind's attempts to rebel against Him."

16. Verse 5: Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ⁶ "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."
- a) So does this verse mean God is going to send a lightening bolt to kill those who rebel against Him? ☺ No, let me explain. The point of these verses is that the Messiah (Jesus) will reign one day over the earth and those who have chosen to rebel and will chose to rebel against Jesus' authority will suffer at that time.
 - b) One view of these verses is that there is coming a major "end time" event where there will be one big final organized rebellion against God. That is the main topic of the book of Revelation. (Some argue that rebellion is a summary of human history since Jesus, while others, like me believe it is a specific end-time event.) The important point is that Jesus Himself will strike down that rebellion.
 - c) OK, what about all the organized rebellions throughout history where political and religious leaders claim in effect, "we are to live their way" and ignore God?
 - i) First of all, I would hate to be in their shoes on judgment day.
 - ii) The point is not how the rebellious came to an end in this life; the point is that God has and will strike them down. Of all the great political and religious leaders who claimed that "they are the way" to heaven or happiness, all of them become long forgotten "footnotes" in history. The name of Jesus lives on despite all the efforts throughout history to eliminate Christianity from the world.
 - a) There have been lots of attempts to wipe out Christianity in different parts of the world. God in effect, laughs at those attempts and in His own timing He strikes down people who organize such rebellions. Despite all of those attempts, the name of Jesus has lived on.
 - b) In the past 100 years alone, belief in Jesus has survived communism, it has survived countries where Christianity is illegal to practice and the number of Christians in those locations continue to grow despite that persecution.
 - d) Getting back to the verses, the main point is that the Messiah (Jesus) is ruling from heaven now and there will come a day where He will rule on earth despite every effort made, past, present and future to stop that event from happening. What is my proof? It is because I understand the bible has a 100% track record for predictive accuracy. I therefore believe the future predictions that have not come true yet, will, one day.
 - e) Finally, notice in Verse 6 where it says that the son will rule on "my holy hill".
 - i) Some interpret that to be the hill where Jesus was crucified.
 - ii) Personally, I disagree. I believe it refers to the location where the Jewish Temple stood but does not exist at this time. That will be the place of Jesus "headquarters" when He rules on earth some day.
 - iii) If you want more proof of this, note that when Jesus was born, an angel told Mary that her son would rule the world from "David's throne". (See Luke 1:32). David's throne is in Jerusalem on the temple mount. Jesus is currently ruling from heaven, and He has never yet ruled from that temple mount location.
17. Verse 7: I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.
- a) The first thing I want you to notice is a "change of speaker". In Verses 4-6, God the Father is the one doing the speaking as Verse 5 says that He (God) will put His King (a reference to the Messiah, Jesus His Son) on my holy hill.
 - i) Here in Verse 7 the second sentence reads He (the Father) said to me (The Son). That alone is the proof that the "Son" (Jesus) is speaking in these verses.
 - b) Next, let's talk about the line that says, "Today I have become your Father". Yes, Jesus is speaking, but He is quoting God the Father. The question is, how did Jesus "become" His son? Does this mean God the Father created Jesus ?

- c) First let me kill the Jesus was "created" theory. John 1:2 and Colossians 1:16 both teach us that Jesus is responsible for creating all (emphasis on all) things. Then if you read Isaiah 44:24, it says that the LORD (all capitals in most English bibles) created all things.
 - i) In Isaiah the word "LORD" in all capitals means "JWTH" or Jehovah-God. If Isaiah says God created all things, and the New Testament says that Jesus created all things, which makes Jesus equal to God the Father.
 - ii) So if this verse does not mean Jesus was created, what does it mean? It means that since Jesus "passed the test" of dying on the cross and paying the price for sin, Jesus then earns the right to be called God's son. We as Christians also get the right to be called God's son by believing in what Jesus did. (See Galatians 4:5.)
 - d) Given all of that, what is Jesus' reward for paying the price for sin? Verse 8 answers that question. That verse says in effect that there is coming a day when all the nations (i.e., the entire world) becomes Jesus' personal possession.
 - i) But doesn't the world belong to Jesus right now? Technically the answer is no, and let me explain: When Satan was tempting Jesus, one of the temptations was when Satan said that I will give you (Jesus) the whole world if you (Jesus) bow down and worship me (Satan). See Luke 4:6-7 for the reference to this event.
 - ii) My point is Jesus would not really be tempted unless Satan really owns the world. This world belonged to Satan since the time sin entered this world. That is why Jesus said in effect this world is not our (believers) home. (See John 12:25.) There is coming a day, when the world as gets redeemed to Jesus. (See Revelation 5.)
 - iii) Coming back to Verse 8 of the Psalm, it is describing a future event that has not happened yet. It is describing Jesus ruling over the planet earth and not just those of us throughout history who have chosen Jesus as their savior.
 - iv) While you are letting that sink in, I'll move on to Verse 9. ☺
18. Verse 9: You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."
- a) Verse 9 gives another prediction. This verses is still talking about "God the Son" (The Messiah in Hebrew, the "Christ" from the Greek) ruling the world with an "iron scepter".
 - b) Remember that this verse that was written roughly six hundred years before Jesus came to earth, predicts a day where the "son" will rule with an iron scepter. Further, Jesus will dash them (the nations who refuse to acknowledge Him) to pieces like pottery.
 - c) Remember that we are reading poetry. The verse is not literally saying that Jesus is going to break clay pots with an iron stick. This verse is saying that when Jesus rules the world one day, those who refuse to obey Him will be dashed to pieces like iron striking clay.
 - i) I don't know about you, but that alone is a pretty good motivation to honor Jesus as the ruler of the world. ☺
 - d) So, who are the "they" that Jesus is crushing? Some argue it refers to Jesus "first coming" in that those who refuse to turn to Jesus get sent to hell. I personally hold the view that this refers to Jesus second coming, where He literally rules over the world and yes Jesus destroys (sends to hell) those (or at least some) who don't accept His leadership.
 - e) Let me talk for a second why the second coming of Jesus is necessary. In other words, why can't the world just go on forever with some people accepting Jesus and some people getting sent to hell for refusing to accept that payment for sin?
 - i) First, one has to accept the idea that "God is in charge and He makes the rules". One of His rules is just like the fact that the human race had a starting date, there is also some future unknown ending date where God will "wrap up" the world as we know it. This verse is talking about that time era.
 - ii) The next idea to accept is to ask the question, "Does heaven have a limited number of people or an infinite number of people?" As best I can tell, there are going to be "x" number of people in heaven. Only God the Father knows what "x" is. When we are close to reaching "x" there has to be a day when Jesus comes back.

- iii) For those of us who believes that Jesus will literally rule the earth for a thousand years, why is that event necessary? Why can't all the saved just "go to heaven" and that's a wrap for the earth, as some Christians will argue? I believe the purpose of the millennium (which means a thousand years) is to show mankind how God intended the world to be ruled. Therefore, God wants to set up a period of "eternal peace" that begins with a thousand year rule over the earth.
 - a) That in effect, is like asking what would have happened if Adam and Eve never ate the fruit in the first place? Jesus ruling over our lives.
 - iv) Further, there are going to be people who survive through the final rebellion against God whenever that rebellion occurs and they will see Jesus return. Such people would need their own testing period for their salvation. For such people that Jesus rules with an "iron stick". (Christians don't have to fear that stick! ☺)
- f) There, now that I've explained this verse with a lot of future theology, we can move on.
19. Verse 10: Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.
- a) As best we can tell, we have another change of speaker here in verse 10. If you recall, I stated that Verses 4-6 appear to be spoken by God the Father. Verses 7-9 appear to be spoken by God the Son. Most Christian scholars will argue that the last three verses appear to be "God the Holy Spirit" addressing the leaders of the world.
 - b) Let me explain further: The purpose of Verses 10-11 is to convict leaders of the world. It is to say in effect, "fear God with the power that you have as rulers" and remember that God is in charge and not you". In other words, the reason people attribute these last three verses to the Holy Spirit, is because His job is to convict people about our sins and get us to trust God. That is what is happening here in these two verses.
 - i) Verse 10 says that these specific verses are addressed to kings and rulers. By the time one reaches such a position, I find that most (if not all of them) have big egos in the sense they think they are something special for reaching that position.
 - ii) These verses are giving warnings to those "big ego's" that whatever power they have, it was given to them by God, and they should seek the God of Bible for guidance as opposed to just trusting in their own ability to govern.
 - c) Now let's personalize these verses a little. Let's say, we have no intentions of being some great ruler. Why should we care what these verses say? What popped in my head is the biblical expression, "To much is given, much is required" (A paraphrase of Luke 12:48).
 - i) If God is requiring such leaders to serve Him with fear, what does that say to the rest of us? To put it another way, "God holds you and I accountable to whatever role He has given us in life and we have to remember that He is in charge and not us and we should constantly seek His guidance for our lives."
 - ii) In other words, God holds our leaders accountable and holds us accountable too.
 - d) So is this verse saying that as we serve God, we should live in fear of punishment? No, if you are saved, there is no condemnation for believers. (See Romans 8:1.) The point for Christians is that our eternal destiny is somehow determined by how loyal we are to whatever role God calls us to do. Therefore, we need to constantly seek God to ask what He wants of us "right now" and be willing to obey what He wants of us. There are consequences in this lifetime for disobedience to God and I suspect there are eternal consequences as well for those who refuse to live the life that God has called us to live.
20. Verse 12: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.
- a) The idea of "kissing the son" is not about showing romantic expression like one would for their spouse. The idea of that term is like when we kiss someone on the cheek out of respect. The idea is to respect "God the Son" as one would God the Father. It is about acknowledging the Son as the one being in power.

- b) The New Testament makes it very clear that there is no way to salvation by going "around" God the Son (i.e., Jesus). (See John 14:6 on this point.) Here in the Psalms, written hundreds of years before Jesus, we have a clue that one should respect God the Son in order to Respect God the Father.
 - i) In other words, this verse is saying in effect, acknowledge God the Son as the one who is ruling over one's life or else one will pay the eternal consequences.
- c) Well, now that I've scared everyone, let me scare you some more: ☺
 - i) The verse says, "His wrath can flare up at any moment". First notice the word "His". Therefore, whoever is talking is not God the Son and that is why scholars argue these last three verses refer to the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts.
 - ii) So back to the question, what does it mean when the text says in effect that Jesus can get angry at any time and his anger can flare up at us?
 - a) Does this mean that Jesus jumps up and down in anger and fires a few lightening bolts our way when we are disobedient? Not exactly.
 - iii) What it does mean is that for the person who refuses to submit their lives to Christ, they run the danger of their life ending at any time and then having to eternally suffer for refusing to turn to Jesus. It can also mean that whatever power and blessings one can have in this lifetime can suddenly come to an end at any time if one refuses to acknowledge who is really behind our blessings.
 - iv) For the believer, it is a reminder when we turn away from what God desires for our lives, there are consequences to that action.
- d) Let's say we acknowledge Jesus is God the Son and despite our mistakes we still believe He is in charge. How does this verse affect us?
 - i) First of all, it is to remember that when we see nonbelievers being blessed, we should remember that God has a reason for doing that and He can take away those blessings just as fast as He gives them out. It is a reminder to not be jealous of the blessings to nonbelievers as that is "all" the rewards they will ever get.
 - ii) Next, it is to remember that to "fear God" is part of the Christian life. It doesn't mean we walk around shaking in our shoes. ☺ It means we understand that God uses both the "carrot and the stick" to entice us to do His will. In other words there are blessings in this lifetime for obedience to God and suffering for disobedience.
 - iii) When we are disobedient to God, we can and do suffer for that disobedience. As believers in God, we "can't get away with anything". That is why God desires we confess and turn from the sins of our lives. Sooner or later, whatever aspects of our lives we refuse to turn to God will come back to haunt us.
- e) The final line of the Psalm says, "Blessed are all who take refuge in him".
 - i) That sounds a lot like the "blessings" of Psalm 1. The point is the way we are blessed in this life is by sticking close to ("take refuge in") both God the Father and God the Son. That, is how to live the Christian life in one brief sentence.

21. Let me wrap up this lesson by saying in effect, I don't know what God has planned for me through these studies, but I suspect and hope that my relationship with God will deepen through them. My prayer is that God shows us how to live the life He desires for us and that these studies draw us closer to Him by what we learn in these studies of the Psalms.
- a) With that said, I hope these studies are beneficial to you, and that may God continue to use your life and my life to make a difference for Him in all that we do.
22. Let's pray: Father, help us to have a humble attitude about our relationship with You. Help us to seek You as not only the creator of the Universe, but as one who is in control of our lives and has great plans for our lives. Help us to turn from sin and live in a way that is pleasing to You in all that we do. Finally, help us to live in a way that makes a difference for You in this lifetime as we become living witnesses for God the Father and God the Son. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.