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## June 8 : Scriptures Psalm 44-47

### SUMMARY

Psalm 44. When people ask me how things are going, I sometimes say, "I can't complain. Besides, complaining won't change anything." Well, not usually. Most of the time, it just changes my thinking about my situation, knowing I just have to work through the problem with the Lord. However, when a complaint becomes a prayer to the Lord, a complaint can change things. Psalm 44 is a complaint psalm, a lamentation by the psalmist about Israel's situation. In short, it seems Israel has been under attack by neighboring people, and the Lord hasn't given His people victories over them as He's done on other occasions. For example, the psalmist lists Yehovah's great works helping the Israelites clear the Canaanites from their Promised Land under Joshua (44:1-3). Israel could claim no credit. It was the Lord's work alone. The Israelites were just tools in His mighty hand. The psalmist acknowledges this and affirms he looks to Yehovah alone to give Israel victory (44:1-8).

Except it hasn't come, and that sparks the psalmist's complaint. Israel marched out to battle only to be routed by its foes. The enemy has taken both plunder and Israelites. And because Israel has been defeated, the surrounding nations hold them in derision, mocking and scorning them and causing Israel to be ashamed (44:9-16). But this has the psalmist questioning. "All this has happened to us, but we have not forgotten you or betrayed your covenant. Our hearts have not turned back; our steps have not strayed from your path" (44:17-18). It's like the writer is complaining, "What gives, Lord? We're faithful. Why has this happened to us? Oh sure, if we'd turned from You, You'd have every right to let us get squashed by our enemies. But because of Your inaction, we're gettin' slaughtered. Wake up or stop hiding. Save us!"

On what basis does the psalmist make his plea? "Because of your faithful (covenant) love." If you go back and review the covenant blessings at the end of Leviticus (chapter 25) and Deuteronomy (chapter 28), one of those blessings for Israel's covenant faithfulness is the Lord's protection and help in defeating Israel's enemies (Leviticus 26:8; Deuteronomy 28:7). One of the Lord's covenant disciplines, if Israel were unfaithful, is to allow Israel's enemies to defeat them. Therefore, the psalmist complains, "Lord, we've been faithful. Please uphold Your end of the covenant. Deliver us from our enemies." And the psalmist shows us a meaningful way to pray – praying back to God His word, specifically His promises. Then see what happens.

Psalm 45. This is another psalm from the pen of the Korahites, the Levite tribe involved in the music part of the Lord's Temple service. It's another *maskil* (instruction?) to be

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played according to "The Lilies," perhaps a tune or style. It's a lovely psalm, a love psalm, with a wedding theme. It appears to be a psalm to be sung for a royal wedding. The psalmist begins by stating how moved he is by the occasion and moves to singing the groom's praises. The royal groom is a handsome, strong warrior. His "majesty and splendor" show as he rides in to marry his bride. God's throne is mentioned because the king's throne is an extension of Yehovah's throne, and the king is the Lord's anointed one. The psalmist notes that the groom is all perfumed up as he enters to the sound of music to join the entourage of other kings' daughters with the queen at his right hand. The psalmist calls for the new queen to forsake her family and national loyalties as she joins herself to her new "lord." Then the picture shifts from the wedding to the bride's chamber, where she is adorned splendidly and then escorted by her women companions into the king's palace. The psalm closes nicely with a wish that the king's dynasty will continue forever as the royal couple begins their new life together. Ah, how romantic!

Psalm 46. Psalm 46 is another Korahite psalm, "according to *Alamoth*." Your guess is as good as mine about what *alamoth* means. It's another one of those unknown musical notations. The psalm affirms and celebrates God's protection in times of trouble. Even if such times were uber-crazy and tempestuous, the psalmist wouldn't sweat it because God is Israel's refuge (46:1-3). Now, while a river is referenced in this psalm, it seems unlikely to have anything to do with a physical river. Jerusalem is built atop a low-lying mountain. There aren't any rivers there, only a few springs. Later rulers like King Herod of Jesus' day had to construct long-winding aqueducts to bring water to the city. I think I remember that King Herod's water system traversed about 35 miles! Given the context of Israel being protected, this "river with streams" seems to reference God's presence which is a delight to the city. Verse 5 clearly talks about Yehovah's presence in the city which will help Jerusalem stand firm. Should any nation try anything, the Lord will shout and metaphorically cause nations to tremble! But more than just executing war, the Lord's voice also commands peace to break out among the nations (46:9). Not only does He command it, but He also makes it happen! And that's why Israel can find refuge and reassurance with the Lord.

Psalm 47. This psalm takes me way back to the mid- 80s. We used to sing a song with this psalm as the lyrics. It was called "O Clap Your Hands" (by David Grothe), and you can still find it on YouTube. Psalm 47 is a wonderful song that praises the Lord big time and encourages people to make a big noise for Him! Why? Because from the Israelite's perspective, their God is enthroned over the whole earth (not just a nation or region). He's the One, True Almighty God over all gods and peoples! Not only does it paint a picture of the nations coming to worship Yehovah in the psalmist's day, but it evokes many prophecies throughout the scriptures that tell of a coming day when *all* the nations

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will come up to Jerusalem to worship the only God when Jesus reigns from that great city over Israel and every race, tongue, and tribe!

### INSIGHT

Psalm 46:6, 10 grabbed me as we read through this. Amid international turmoil, the Lord utters His voice, "Nations rage, kingdoms topple; the earth melts when he lifts his voice... 'That's enough! Now know that I am God! I am exalted among all nations; I am exalted throughout the world!'" The Bible says that at the end of a terrible time called the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return to earth to take humanity and this planet to an entirely new level.

In this current age, nations rage against nations. Israel has been reborn, but not without near-constant attacks and threats. This turmoil will culminate in a pitched battle for the land and for Jerusalem, the epicenter of God's plan ("Israel as God's epicenter" – hat tip to Joel Rosenberg, author of many fine End Time novels). As Israel's and the Jewish people's King, Jesus will return to defeat Israel's enemies and establish a worldwide rule from Jerusalem, "The moon will be diminished, and the sun will fade, since the Lord of heavenly forces will rule on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, glorious before his elders" (Isaiah 24:23) and "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels[g] with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne" (Matthew 25:31). Jesus' arrival will be heralded by a shout, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Could it be that Jesus' shout will be the same as the apparently prophetic from Psalm 46, "That's enough! Now know that I am God! I am exalted among all nations; I am exalted throughout the world!"?

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## June 9 : Scriptures Psalm 48-50

### SUMMARY

Psalm 48. This psalm by the sons of Korah is an ode to Yehovah and the place of His throne, Jerusalem. It is amazing to stand in Jerusalem. You can stand in one place in the Jewish Quarter and see the ancient world (Hezekiah's Wall), the modern world (all around you), and the future (the Mount of Olives, the place to which Jesus will return). Jerusalem is a head-spinning complicated place in a complicated state, Israel. It is the hope of many people (Jews and Christians) and the bone in the throat of her enemies. Why? Because it's ground-zero to God's world-redeeming plan. Jesus' death and resurrection began God's march toward redeeming the world as it was created, and Jesus' return will start to seal it. And after Satan has been defeated entirely, Jerusalem will remain the center of God's work on earth (Zechariah 8:2).

For centuries the Lord's presence in His Temple in Jerusalem, from King Solomon's day to the Babylonian captivity. This psalm sings of God's greatness in Jerusalem (48:1-3), the nations' reaction to God's formidable greatness in His city (48:4-11), and a final celebration of God's presence in the city (48:12-14).

The NKJV Study Bible states, "Psalm 48 unites with Psalms 46 and 47 to form three great psalms of praise to God for His kingship and his love for the holy city of Jerusalem. This emphasis on Jerusalem has led many scholars to speak of these psalms as "Songs of Zion."

Psalm 49. This psalm is a straightforward declaration about how worthless wealth is in life. The psalmist tells us he has some great wisdom to share with us (49:1-4) and proceeds with a question, "Why should I fear in times of trouble?" (49:5). The wicked have cause to fear because they trust in their wealth (49:6) which can't keep them from dying and losing everything they've worked so hard to gain (49:12). Instead, like sheep, death will shepherd them all into the grave (that's some excellent imagery there!). On the other hand, "the upright will rule over them in the morning," which seems to refer to a resurrection of the righteous. The psalmist speaks of his hope for resurrection and preservation from forever death in 49:15. At the psalm's end, the psalmist lays his wisdom on us. Because wealth can't keep you from death, don't envy the wicked or those who accumulate wealth. Wealth without understanding (of God and His ways) is like a senseless animal that dies.

Psalm 50. Psalm 50 is one by Asaph, which places the psalm's composition around King David's time. It's a wisdom psalm, one of 12 attributed to the Davidic worship leader.

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The psalm's theme is God as Judge and shows Him arriving on the scene to judge His people (50:4-6). He hasn't come to rebuke them but gives them instructions about their sacrifices. Although He does not need sacrifices because everything belongs to Him anyway, He welcomes their offerings and promises to answer their call when they need rescuing.

On the other hand, God does rebuke the wicked for their rotten, covenant-breaking ways. They talk a good game, but their refusal to live God's ways makes their talk worthless to Yehovah. For that, He will rebuke them (50:21). How can they possibly avoid such a rebuke from God? The psalmist says, "Whoever offers a thanksgiving sacrifice honors me, and whoever orders his conduct, I will show him the salvation of God" (50:23). In other words, worship the Lord and watch your ways. Good advice, don't you think?

### INSIGHT

Death is inevitable. We will all die. Perhaps you're feeling the pain of recently losing a loved one. Because of the pain and loss of death, people have searched for how to escape death or at least put it off for as long as possible. All of our efforts to push away death are to no avail. We may succeed for a few extra moments in life because we have good health care, can afford healthy food, or are in nice homes and not exposed to the elements. But death will come, eventually.

The psalmist wrote, "They trust in their wealth and boast of their abundant riches. Yet these cannot redeem a person or pay his ransom to God since the price of redeeming him is too costly, one should forever stop trying—so that he may live forever and not see the Pit" (Psalm 49:6-8).

Even in the Hebrew scriptures, some 1,000 years before Jesus, the idea of our need for salvation that only comes from God and only His way is clear. Whine if you will. Fuss if you must. But the truth is humanity left God's presence when Adam and Eve sinned. We were transferred from the kingdom of light (Eden) into the realm of darkness (the world, unable to connect with God and under satanic pressures and influences). As you may recall, redemption is the process that restores an estranged family member to their family. Knowing that, the psalmist says, "No one can use riches to buy their way back into God's family because the price to pay is too high." True. What person can buy off death and stay alive? Therefore, the psalmist says, "So stop trying!" The psalmist recognizes the need for a price to be paid but knows it's impossible. What's the price that each person is required to pay?

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). If you’ve sinned, the price is death. But how can you pay the price of death to be preserved from death? Obviously, someone else has to pay a death to redeem you from death. And that’s what Jesus did. The psalmist saw the need, but it took almost 1,000 years to reveal the One who would be able to meet that need.

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## June 10 : Scriptures Psalm 51-54

### SUMMARY

Psalm 51. This psalm from David's heart is one of my favorites of all the psalms. I first heard it as a young boy in church, probably around nine years old. After the offering was received, the ushers would bring it up to the front. The pastor would receive the offering plates and place the offering on the altar as the congregation sang Psalm 50:10-12. Even as I write this, I can still hear the song's sound inside my head.

Psalm 51 is a deeply moving piece; the heading helps us understand why David wrote it. If you've followed along in the reading, hopefully, you will remember King David's adultery with another man's wife. This grave sin set in motion a series of sins and judgments that rocked David's world and affected the entire nation of Israel. But the full repercussions of David's sin didn't hit right away. He slept with Bathsheba, had her husband killed in battle, and covered his sin from everyone's eyes but the Lord's. David ignored his sin, but the Lord didn't. Just after his son was born, the Lord spoke to Nathan, the prophet, and told him to drop a bombshell of an indictment on David. As we learn from this psalm, the king had been covering up his sin for almost nine months, which weighed heavily on him. When David reached his breaking point, Nathan thrust his finger in David's face and exclaimed, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7). With that, the flood of emotions from David's extreme guilt burst. He confessed his sin with tears and cries. This psalm is his cry.

He pleads for the Lord's forgiveness and cleansing for such terrible sins (51:1-2). Although David sinned against many people during this tawdry episode, he knows it comes down to sinning against the Lord and the Lord alone. He knows God is entirely just and righteous in whatever punishment he declares for David. In essence, David throws himself at the mercy of the divine court. He knows God wants the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And so he admits it all before the God who knows everything and is the only one who can forgive and restore him.

His string of pleas is heart-wrenching. "Purge me, wash me, make me hear joy and gladness, don't look at my sins, blot out my sins, give me a new heart and a new spirit, don't throw me from your presence, and don't take your Spirit from me (as you did to Saul). Instead, restore and uphold me, and I'll tell other sinners how you treated me. I'll encourage them to return to You." Beautiful!

David goes on beseeching Yehovah to forgive him for murdering Uriah (51:14), and should the Lord do so, David will sing His praises! There's no doubt that David

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participated in the Temple's sacrificial service from the time he sinned until Nathan's revelation. Still, none of those offerings forgave the guilt of the sin he refused to confess and repent. David shares a sweet truth with us, "You don't want sacrifices. If I gave an entirely burned offering, you wouldn't be pleased. A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God. You won't despise a heart, God, that is broken and crushed" (51:16-17). When it comes to sin, religious works mean *nothing* and *do nothing*. *God is after our hearts*. The offering is acceptable only when the heart is right with God (51:19).

Psalm 52. In 1 Samuel 22, Doeg the Edomite ratted out David, who was on the run from King Saul. Saul wanted to kill David because he knew God anointed David to be Israel's next king. He feared for his kingdom and his son, Jonathan's, succession to the throne, although Jonathan was devoted to David, and kingship didn't matter to him. This psalm was David's response when he learned Doeg had gone to King Saul. Although Doeg thinks he's so great by squealing on David, he's just an evil person that the Lord will take down (52:5). And rather than the accolades Doeg wants, he'll get jeers from good, godly people as a villain. On the other hand, David will thrive and prosper because he trusts Yehovah (52:8).

Psalm 53. And speaking of fools, psalm 53 is about foolish people who refuse to acknowledge God (53:1). A fool is someone who refuses to follow the Lord's moral standard. Yes, a fool can be an intelligent fool. Therefore, "They are corrupt and do horrible deeds; not one of them does anything good" (53:1). See? There's the lack of morality factor. So what is the Lord going to do? He's going to examine the people to see if there's anyone who seeks Him and walks in His ways (53:2-3). Nope. Humanity is prone to foolishness because of our fallen nature. What about the foolish people who continue to reject the Lord and attack Israel (53:4)? God will judge them ("scattering the bones" commonly refers to the final judgment of the wicked. They rejected God, so He will reject them. On the other hand, God will deliver Zion, His people.

Psalm 54. Here we have another psalm based on David's life experience. David was hiding among the Ziphites, and they, too, ratted him out to King Saul (1 Samuel 23). It's a simple two-part psalm. The first part is David's cry to God for deliverance from those seeking his life, and he wants to be proven innocent. But unlike those who have betrayed or are trying to kill him, David relies on the Lord. He knows the Lord will sustain him and bring his enemies down. Therefore, in faith, David will offer a free-will sacrifice to celebrate his deliverance when the time comes.

## INSIGHT

Psalm 51 is a beautiful follow-up to the insight about Psalm 49. David knows there is

nothing he can do to get out of the guilt and condemnation he feels because of his terrible acts. What David brings to the “salvation table” shows us to throw ourselves on God’s mercy. “I got nothing, Jesus. Help.” That is our starting point to be restored from the satanic kingdom of this world into God’s kingdom of life (Colossians 1:13-14). Do you see the redeem/transfer idea in the verse connected with Jesus’ work? We need to throw ourselves on God’s mercy offered through Jesus and continue living in His mercy to live a life that glorifies Him.

## June 11 : Scriptures Psalm 55-58

### SUMMARY

Psalm 55. This psalm is bitter because the enemy plaguing David is a friend (55:12-14, 20). The emotion in the psalm comes from betrayal. David is upset by his enemy's attack against him; at this point, we don't realize it's his former friend (55:1-3). His enemy's attack has brought so much overwhelming distress to David that he just wants to fly away and hide from whatever his attacker is doing to him (55:4-8). He again calls down the Lord's judgment on the wicked as David often does (55:9). Reading his description of a violent city full of strife and crime reminds me of many cities in the United States that experienced the George Floyd riots and the surge in crime because of the "defund the police" movement. But the violence and crimes caused by strangers aren't at the heart of David's dire lament. It's his friend's betrayal that's struck him so painfully.

A betrayal is a stunning form of violence because it tears so hard at one's soul and emotions. It hurts so deeply because we've allowed ourselves to be vulnerable to the other person, and the betrayer has used that vulnerability to strike deep and hard. It's unimaginable at times how someone who has been such a close friend could turn against someone who trusted them, even with their life. But it happened to David.

David's reaction is understandable. While he calls down their judgment from God, David affirms the Lord's ability to save him (55:16). Even in his deepest despair over his betrayal, David knows Yehovah hears and will help him. The Lord will go after his enemy, so David only has to draw close to Him. David returns to his former friend and describes his duplicity. Outwardly, he's the picture of reassuring friendship. Inwardly, it's knives out. What a creep! David comforts himself with two truths. 1) He can throw all his cares on the Lord who will sustain him, and 2) the Lord will deal with the betrayer as He does with all the wicked. For that, David can trust the Lord.

Psalm 56. David unleashes another lament in Psalm 56, which covers the same event as Psalm 34 when David fled to Philistine territory and got himself in a lot of trouble. The psalm is about trusting God in a bad situation. Despite his foes coming against him (56:1-2), David will trust the Lord for help (56:3-4). After all, his attackers are just mortals. David's support comes from GOD! He describes what his opponents are doing as they lie in wait to get David, and yet, David knows the Lord watches over him (56:8-9). And so, not only will David praise God for His help, but he will fulfill his vow to worship the Lord through a sacrifice for the deliverance to come.

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Psalm 57. By now, it seems we're in a series of "David's in trouble" psalms. The heading says David wrote this psalm while on the run from Saul. It's related to the event when David hid in a cave, likely when he had the opportunity to kill Saul when the king went into the dark cave where David and his men were hiding farther back (1 Samuel 24). It's interesting to know the back story of the psalm because the story shows through the verses. David hides in a cave until the danger is gone, "Be gracious to me, God, be gracious to me, for I take refuge in you. I will seek refuge in the shadow of your wings until danger passes" (57:1). And in the dark, you can almost hear David whispering for God's protection (57:2-3). Poetically, he describes the danger all around him (57:4-6), but David knows they, not he, will be destroyed. Therefore, David will erupt in praise as he remembers the Lord's deliverance. He sings about Yehovah's faithfulness.

Psalm 58. I don't know what set David off to write this psalm, but it's definitely about a grave injustice. At the very start, he accuses the "mighty ones" of judging the people unjustly to the point of bringing violence to the land. But as a friend of mine says, "Evil's gonna evil." And does evil ever evil! David's description is so on the mark when we see gross injustices all around us. The innocent are punished, and the guilty are treated lightly or set free. I have to admit, I'm with David on this one, "God, knock the teeth out of their mouths; Lord, tear out the young lions' fangs. May they vanish like water that flows by; may they aim their blunted arrows. Like a slug that moves along in slime, like a woman's miscarried child, may they not see the sun." And yet, we're called to pray for our enemies, right? Right. We can pray the Lord saves them if they'll turn to Him, and the Lord saves us from them if they won't. And in the meantime, let's pray for God-backed justice to prevail because it's sweet when it comes!

### INSIGHT

In Psalm 55, we see another picture fulfilled in Jesus' life. It wasn't an enemy who betrayed Jesus. It was one of His close disciples who betrayed Jesus with a kiss. How terrible! A sign of devotion and friendship on Jesus' cheek became the dagger Judas thrust into Jesus' back. These words come alive, "Now it is not an enemy who insults me—otherwise I could bear it; it is not a foe who rises up against me—otherwise I could hide from him. But it is you, a man who is my peer, my companion and good friend! We used to have close fellowship" (55:12-14).

As a lesson for us, when we experience such a terrible betrayal, we can learn from David how to handle it, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never allow the righteous to be shaken... I will trust in you" (55:22-23)

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## June 12 : Scriptures Psalm 59-63

### SUMMARY

Psalm 59. Again, we have another threat to David's life. The heading says, "When Saul sent agents to watch the house and kill him," and we find the event in 1 Samuel 19:11-17. Psalm 59 begins with David's prayer to the Lord for rescue (59:1-5), followed by David's assessment of the threat. Those who are trying to take his life are like wild dogs, growling and snarling as they skulk around David's house for their opportunity to strike. They're confident because they don't think anyone knows their plan or hears them (59:6-7). But the Lord does! David understands the Lord laughs at them and will deliver His righteous man. Therefore, David expresses his hope in the Lord (59:9-10). Verse 11 starts David's second imprecatory prayer (a prayer of ill toward one's enemies). But the remarkable thing is David doesn't want the Lord to strike down those who seek his life but to foil their plan, wreck their lives, and make them walking examples to others of what the Lord does to the wicked (59:13). In the meantime, the "dogs return," and David finishes his psalm with a hymn of praise to the Lord. What a declaration of hope those last two verses are!

Psalm 60. And now we have a military psalm. The heading says it's a teaching, so perhaps David wrote this after being inspired by a defeat (perhaps after fighting Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah) and then encouraged by Joab's victory against the Edomites in the Valley of Salt. Such a psalm might be sung during training or military exercises to reassure and encourage the troops of the Lord's victory even after a setback.

The first part is David's dismay after a defeat. We would say, "Yeah, we lost," but David uses the wonderfully picturesque language of being "cast off and broken us down, displeased with us, shaking the earth and breaking it up, making his people drink the wine of confusion." Wow! Not a good day at the office, David. But God has given His people a banner, i.e., a victory and a sign of success. According to David, why did God save His people, Israel? Because He loved them (60:5). Then God speaks in 60:6-8. He tells the troops that He's in charge and can do what He wants to their enemies. David responds by acknowledging that only God can give him and Israel their victory (60:9-12).

Psalm 61. This psalm is a medium-sized lament. David is down, and he feels overwhelmed. Isn't this something to which all of us can relate? There are days when we feel besieged by the cares of life. David has a cure for that – think about how the Lord lives above the circumstances of our lives, and because He's with us, He can lift us above such things, give us help and hope, and become that place of refuge. By that, I mean we think about how the Lord knows what we're going through and what we need to handle

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our troubles. Just sitting back and thinking about God's immensity, power, and wisdom brings us to a place of rest for a time. "Yeah, things are overwhelming, but I'm just going to let them slide and take some time alone with the Lord, listening to some worship music, talking to Him, or quietly resting in the trust we have in Him. Because David took a time out with Yehovah, he's gained a more positive outlook and asks for long life. That's quite the change from someone who sounded like he was ready to pack it in (61:5-7).

Psalm 62. Jeduthun wrote this piece (or at least it's attributed to him), and it's a beautiful song of trust in the Lord. The psalm opens with Jeduthun in a place of quiet rest. How can he find such calmness? Because He knows the Lord. Jeduthun has experienced the Lord as the source of his salvation, his rock, his salvation, and his defense. Therefore, Jeduthun will stand firm when troubles rise against him (62:1-2), specifically in the form of people attacking him (62:3-4). But Jeduthun has no fear. He simply rehearses what he's already declared about the Lord, and because Yehovah is such a constant help in his life, he can find that place of quiet expectant rest. He tells others to do the same if they want that same sense of refuge, "All you people: Trust in him at all times! Pour out your hearts before him! God is our refuge!" (62:8). Jeduthun has a great perspective. Why fret when life is so short and fragile? Rather than depend on the low things of life – material goods or doing evil – it's better to rely on the Lord for "strength belongs to God, and faithful love belongs to you, Lord."

Psalm 63. When I read this psalm, I think of the time I've walked in the Judean wilderness in Israel. It can get extremely hot and dry! Even in the hill country where David pastured his sheep as a young man, the countryside gets mighty hot and dry between May and October. When David invokes an intense thirst for God, he's simply relating to his experience. Being without God is like being in a "dry, desolate place where there's no water." To get a big drink of the Lord, King David simply looks from his palace to the Tent of the Lord that he constructed in his city, Jerusalem (63:2). I picture him gazing at the Tent where the Lord's presence hovers over the Ark of the Covenant. Knowing the Lord is so near causes David to erupt with joy, "My lips will glorify you because your faithful love is better than life. So I will bless you as long as I live; at your name, I will lift up my hands. You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise you with joyful lips" (63:3-5). Even at night, the sense of God's presence remains with David as he lay on his bed, listening to the muffled night sounds. He keenly aware of the Lord's protection because His "right hand" (the strong hand, Yehovah's strength) has a firm grip on him. Therefore, enemies may exist, but the king knows their end, even food for jackals. But for David and all who swear allegiance to Yehovah, they will glory in the Lord.

**INSIGHT**

The troubles in David's life may be different than ours, but just as distressing, right. It's funny when I and some of my friends get into a whining session about our difficulties. It always seems to devolve down to, "Oh yeah? Well, mine tops yours." Why is that? Because *your* trouble doesn't affect *me*, and mine affects me. We all face hardships. Can we settle that? And these things are tough to wrestle with, depending on how intense or persistent they are.

What was one of the ways David handled the troubles that surrounded him in life? One of his primo ways was taking time alone with God to reflect on who He is and His marvelous works. Our troubles are passing, but God is eternal, and the life He has for us into eternity causes our momentary troubles to pale in comparison. The Apostle Paul knew this, "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17) and "But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Philippians 3:7-9).

When we put our eyes on the Lord and what's in store for us, it deflates the intensity of our troubles to a degree, often making them less than overwhelming. If you're going through something like this now. Take a moment to focus on our magnificent God and what we have in store through Jesus. Then, press on!

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## June 13 : Scriptures Psalm 64-67

### SUMMARY

Psalm 64. Sometimes I think it's odd that part of the Temple's worship music, given by David to the Chief Musician, are songs bemoaning the personal attacks David experienced. They don't seem to be the usual praise and worship fare that many of today's contemporary worship teams sing. Think about it. What would you think if one of the worship songs on a Sunday morning said, "Listen to me when I complain, God! Protect my life from the enemy's terror! Hide me from the secret plots of wicked people; hide me from the schemes of evildoers who sharpen their tongues like swords" and the rest of David's complaints in this psalm (64:1-6)? You'd probably have a few folks tapping on the pastor's office door, grabbing his arm after the service to tell the Chief Musician (the worship leader) to strike that bummer of a song from the repertoire. But the book of psalms is about life, all of life's experiences, both happy and sad. Perhaps we *do* need some songs that cry out for God to help us because people and leaders in our nation are bent on destroying what God created on these shores. Maybe we need some heart-rending songs, as Keith Green wrote in the '70s, such as *Dust to Dust* and *My Eyes Are Dry*.

But David doesn't stay in that place. That's important. He knows Yehovah will easily take out the wicked, and those who watch their downfall will fear God and think about what He's done. As for the righteous, they will be glad when evil is overthrown, declare their trust in God, and glory in the Lord! *Selah*.

Psalm 65. In this psalm, I believe David again draws inspiration from his experience as a shepherd. Think of the countless hours this young boy spent in the fields with his father's sheep. He was with the sheep in good and bad weather, from the sun's rising to its going down, and throughout the year's seasons. You know, when you don't have a screen plastered in front of your face, there's a big beautiful world out there that God created for His children. David blends this nature theme with his experience of Yehovah's forgiveness and merciful atonement for which He will be praised. This psalm is a wisdom and creation song.

All the people of the earth will come to the Lord (65:2). David admits his sinfulness and rejoices that God will forgive him. It's wise to be the person who will draw close to the Lord, live in His courts (His presence), and receive salvation from judgment. Yehovah is not just Israel's Savior but for all people who live in His creation and put their confidence in Him (65:5). And speaking of God's creation, David is swept up in praise to the Lord about His majesty over all creation, how He cares for the earth and provides for His entire

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world. I can almost see David sitting on a high rocky outcrop and scanning the horizon as the rains move in from the Mediterranean Sea miles away. He knows the rains will fill the furrows of the farms and cause the ground to burst into bloom. The land will soon become lush and verdant with grain and grazing flocks, washed in the colors of wildflowers.

Okay, put down the tablet and the phone and go outside. Look at the beautiful world the Lord has given to you to enjoy.

Psalm 66. What a wonderful hymn of praise Psalm 66 is! It's a great teaching tool for praise and worship. What tickles me is that there is nothing mild or subdued about the psalmist's encouragements – *make a joyful shout, sing out, make His praise glorious! Bam!* The psalmist isn't pulling any punches. Forget the mild and retiring (boring) hymn sings. Crank up the choir and the musicians and let fly! Okay, so we know how powerfully we're to praise God. For what should we praise Him? His awe-inspiring works, His mighty power, and making His enemies submit to Him. All the earth should be rocking with Yehovah!

The psalmist refers to the Lord's mighty work that brought Israel through the Red Sea as an encouragement to worship (66:5-7). Next, he urges all people to praise the Lord for His care by preserving our lives and for giving us stability in life. Even if the Lord allows troubles and adversities to override His people (even attacks by other nations), the psalmist will still praise Him for Yehovah's deliverance. There's *another* reason to glorify God.

Therefore, the psalmist will fulfill his vows as part of his worship time with the Lord. Yes, praise and worship are sacrifices we can make today because it takes our time, attention, and effort. Finally, the psalmist again urges all to worship the Lord but not to hold sin in their hearts because God won't hear their sacrifice of praise. That's not the case with the psalmist. He knows God has heard Him and didn't "reject my prayer; he didn't withhold his faithful love from me" (66:20).

Psalm 67. This simple psalm calls on God to be merciful to Israel, bless them, and look upon them favorably. Why? So that all the nations will witness God's marvelous grace upon a nation. The psalmist desires that *all* nations join Israel in praise of Yehovah because "you judge the nations fairly and guide all nations on the earth." They just don't know it yet. When God blesses Israel, then all the nations will be blessed. And interestingly, that is God's covenant promise to Abraham, "all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3).

**INSIGHT**

I've been a Christian for decades, 40+ years. During that time, it was drilled into my head that my Prime Directive (thanks to *Star Trek*) was to evangelize people who are estranged from God. So we went on door to door "witnessing" campaigns and participated in missions outreaches with drama to tell the Gospel, the Good News that we reconnect with our Heavenly Father because Jesus paid the price to redeem us (restore us to God's family). That's all good, but when I started learning about what witnessing means in the Bible, I realized I was working on the lowest level and (usually) most ineffective way to share Jesus. What is the most effective way to share God with a lost world?

LIVE LIKE HIM! Yup, it's true. Actions speak louder than words. I love what a Jewish woman said to my Christian friend. "Let me follow you around for a week, and I'll tell you what you believe."

So, why was Yehovah so adamant about Israel living His way? 1) They were in covenant with Him, which is the summary of the Torah/Law, and 2) "*Be (action) holy as I am holy*" (Leviticus 11:45). In other words, "Live like me because you're supposed to look like your Father." And when we live like Him, His favor is upon us, and other people can see that.

David captures this in "*May God be gracious to us and bless us; may he make his face shine upon us so that your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations*" (67:1-2).

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## June 14 : Scriptures Psalm 68-70

### SUMMARY

Psalm 68. Psalm 68 is one massive psalm of praise to God's Glory and His Goodness to Israel (per the heading). It starts with a bang by asking God to smite His enemies by His presence while the righteous rejoice in God's nearness (68:1-3). The Mighty One who rides on the clouds is the defender of the vulnerable (orphans and widows), establishes families for those who have none, releases the poor, and prospers them. But not so the "rebellious ones." They get dry and parched land (68:4-7). The psalmist waxes poetic in his description of what the Lord has done for His people, drawing on Deborah's Song (Judges 5, the rains breaking forth) and the Exodus story of Israel's meeting with God at Sinai (Exodus 19), per the NKJV Study Bible. 68:11 speaks of the women who proclaimed God's greatness at the Egyptian Army's demise at the Red Sea, led by Moses' sister, Miriam. The Lord "scattered kings" when Israel conquered the land of Canaan, first the east side of the Jordan River (a reference to Bashan), then the west side where God's presence dwelled in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. When Israel left Egypt, they went with vast treasures, which they then used for the Tabernacle (68:17-18). The psalmist blesses God for all His blessings to Israel, especially salvation, and escapes from death.

The psalmist praises Yehovah for His action against their enemies, followed by a description of the grand procession of Levites (singers and musicians) leading the tribes into the Temple grounds for worship. Given the description of the procession participants, I think this likely describes all of Israel coming up to Jerusalem for one of the Feasts of the Lord. The remainder of the psalm is a look ahead to the days when all nations come up to Jerusalem to rejoice before Yehovah, and their kings bring great gifts and offerings. Who is this Yehovah? He "who rides in the ancient, highest heavens... and thunders with his powerful voice... who is majestic over Israel and whose power is in the clouds." What a stunning climax to this immense psalm of praise!

Psalm 69. And now we go from a rip-roaring ode to God's greatness to one of David's deep laments. Talk about a mood swing.

David's Psalm 69 has messianic prophecies about Jesus. I like what the NKJV Study Bible says about the comparison between Psalm 22 (Jesus' crucifixion) and this psalm. "Whereas Ps. 22 describes Jesus' physical sufferings, Ps. 69 focuses more on His emotional and spiritual suffering. Yet this psalm was written by David approximately a thousand years before the events it describes. Both psalms begin with the sufferings of David but have their full meaning in the sufferings of Jesus."

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I encourage you to read through the psalm from David's perspective and then do it through the lens of Jesus and His crucifixion. In both cases, David and Jesus are in deep distress. Their situation is seemingly hopeless, describing themselves as overwhelmed by a flood and on the verge of drowning. David says his throat is dry (69:3), and Jesus said, "I thirst," a literal fulfillment of this psalm as well as both men being hated for no reason (69:4). While David confesses his sin, Jesus had no sin, but both men bear reproach and shame. Both became strangers to their fellow Jews (because many refused to embrace Jesus as Israel's Messiah).

David proclaims his zeal for the Lord's house (the Tent on Mount Zion), and the Gospel writers described Jesus' driving out the money changers as coming from His zeal for His Father's house (John 2:17). Both men describe their great pain at the people's reproach and ridicule (69:12). And yet, both men called out to their Heavenly Father to preserve them from death, pictured as drowning and going down to the Pit, the standard reference to Sheol, the place of the Dead. David avoided it, but Jesus went through it and was raised from the dead (69:13-14). Both men cry out to God for help and not to turn His face from them, reminiscent of Psalm 22:1 "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

David feels the shame and dishonor dished out to him, and so did Jesus. David's heart was breaking from his sorrow, and Jesus' heart (according to medical estimates) was physically breaking via the stress of the crucifixion. Both men say no one will help them. They're given bitter water to drink and sour wine, but David is poetic as he describes what he's going through (drinking bitterness). However, Jesus did get sour vinegar and gall on a sponge for His thirst (27:34).

David launches into a highly imprecatory prayer, calling down trouble on those who afflicted him after they saw God disciplining the king (69:26). The worst thing David could pray for them was to be struck from the Book of Life (69:28) and not recorded with the righteous. Yes, this is huge. David asks Yehovah to damn them to an eternity apart from Him after death. Imagine praying those kinds of prayers during a Sunday service or prayer time.

On the other hand, Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). But when do the wicked enemies get theirs? God says for us to leave that final judgment up to Him, "*Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord*" (Romans 12:19, italics author). However, Jesus did pronounce a curse on Jerusalem and the house of Israel toward the end of His ministry because the leaders rejected Him. Read this carefully, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to

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her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See, your house is abandoned to you. I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Luke 13:34-35). Israel's destruction and exile were the same punishment she received for continually rejecting God, which brought on the Babylonian exile. The good news is Yehovah did not abandon them forever. He rescued them from their exile and restored them to their land.

David completes his psalm with a rousing affirmation of his faith in God because he knows the Lord hears the humble and needy and rescues them. As for Jesus' resurrection, who could be more humble than the man who submitted Himself to His Father's plan and died on the cross, taking our sins upon Himself? Who could be needier than a righteous dead man who needs life to be restored to life in God's presence forever? David looks ahead to the time when Israel will live in God's presence and prosper. Wow, what a remarkable journey that was!

Psalm 70. This short psalm was lifted from Psalm 40:13-17. Check it out. It's almost word for word, and it's another lament on behalf of those who are poor and needy, the people who have no worldly support to help them. Have you ever prayed a bullet prayer? Some call them arrow prayers, and the point is (pun intended) that such a prayer is fired off to God quickly. This section of Psalm 40 was lifted and served such a purpose besides being a comfort to those poor and needy people who heard the Levites sing this psalm.

### INSIGHT

I appreciate how remarkably God's Word foreshadows His work, as in David's lament and Jesus' experience during His crucifixion. 1) Foreshadowing gives me a deeper insight into what Jesus went through, and 2) it affirms that Yehovah is entirely in control. Period. Everything passes through His hands from start to finish and *will* be fulfilled at the End, just before God renews everything to the original pattern (Revelation 21-22).