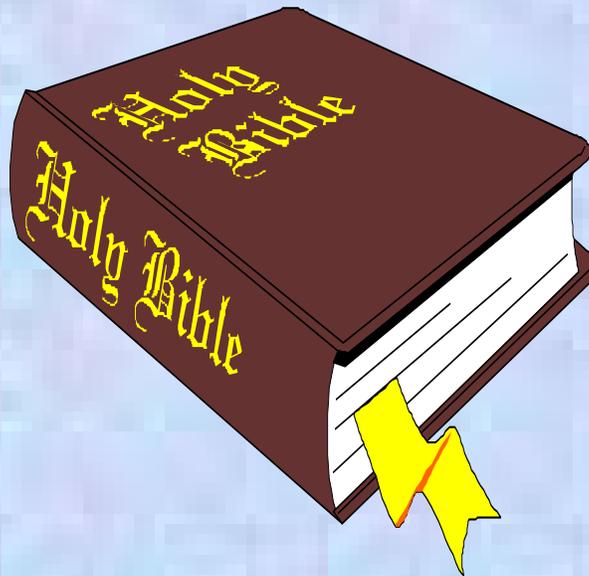


*A Year's Spiritual Journey through a Study of
Old Testament Books*

Part #2

Important Lessons To be learned From
**OLD TESTAMENT
BOOKS OF POETRY**



13 Lessons

**Prepared by:
PAUL E. CANTRELL**

2005

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Lesson One

“Introduction to the Books of Poetry”

The Old Testament has a remarkable diversity of content: **Law, History, Poetry, Devotional, Wisdom, Prophecy, Preaching, etc.** The books have been divided into five sections: **Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets.** This series of studies will be looking briefly at the five books of Poetry: **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.**

The above five books are referred to as Poetry because of the style of writing. But other terms are used to identify the contents of these books, such as: **Devotional Literature** or **Wisdom Literature.** The **Psalms** and the **Song of Solomon** would be considered Devotional in nature, while **Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes** would be considered Wisdom Literature.

DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE

The **Psalms** were considered the “Hymnbook” of the Jewish people in their assemblies, as well as for personal use. They have been divided into five sections: (1-41), (42-72), (73-89), (90-106), and (107-150). The largest portion of the Psalms has been attributed unto David, but there are quite a few that their author is not identified. About 28 are attributed to: Solomon, Moses, Asaph, Sons of Korah, Heman, and Ethan.

The different types of Psalms have been as: **Hymns** (8, 19, 29, 33, etc), **Laments** (44, 74, 79, 80, 83, etc.), **Thanksgiving** (66, 67, 124, 129, etc.), **Blessing & Curse** (mixed in with other types—34:8; 40:4; 84:5, 12; 91:1, etc.), and **Wisdom & Didactic Poems** (127, 133, 49, 1, 112, 128, etc.). The Hymns are primarily of praise to Jehovah, while the Laments involve: Invocation, lamentation, supplication, motivation, and a vow. The thanksgiving Psalms are usually combined with praise and lament.

The **Song of Solomon** deals primarily with personal devotion to one another in the marital relationship.

WISDOM LITERATURE

The book of **Proverbs** deals mostly with moral precepts and a basic philosophy of life rather than on the devotional side of Religion. Very little reference is made to Israel as being the chosen people of God. The Proverbs tell men how to live in a “work-a-day” world, dealing with their individuality, social relationships, and their private thoughts. They are concerned with a way of life that is good and has meaning. A great deal of appeal is made for the reader to seek after the greatest prize: WISDOM! This wisdom would give him the right course to live by and as well would enable him to teach others how life should be lived. Wisdom was something that could be taught and learned and should be sought after (Proverbs 1:20-23). The primary teachers of wisdom would be parents (Proverbs 1:8-9). But even this learning had to be preceded by the

fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). Teachers and Counselors could then build upon Parental teaching. The purpose of wisdom is to be able to meditate upon life, the principles of life, the problems of life, and to find solutions for life.

The book of **Job** and **Ecclesiastes** approaches life from a different viewpoint. While Proverbs tells us how to live and we order our lives accordingly, we naturally expect that things will work out better for us. However, life doesn't always work that way, for we can see that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer at times with no apparent answer as to why. Job and the book of Ecclesiastes try to come to grips with the mystery of God's ways in this universe in dealing with man. These two books let us see clearly that there is no neat little package that has all the answers. Life is complex and we need all the help we can get to live it correctly.

WHAT IS THEIR VALUE FOR US TODAY?

1. To help us learn from the wisdom gained by others. One of the evidences of man's foolishness is his disregard for the past or the old and never learn from the mistakes of others. But this wisdom is not just something that is old, but it is relevant still today because it is from God....and sanctioned by God!

2. Human problems basically do not change over the years. We still have the same problems that they had in Job's day or David's day. We still have violence within and between groups and classes and societies. We still have racial and religious animosities. We still have selfishness, hatred, jealousies, strife, etc. We still have human using other humans to their own ends. There is still a large gap between the haves and the have-nots. God's wisdom worked for them and it will work for us today.

3. God's wisdom can help us seal the real issues and problems of life. The answers to life's problems are complex, not simple. The wise will allow himself to be taught correctly, while the foolish will despise understanding and knowledge. The book of Job deals with one of the basic questions of life and how to deal with it. Ecclesiastes looks at life through the eye of the observer and draws conclusions about what really matters in life.

4. In general, these books help us to see what the basic moral issues of life really are. They are questions of justice, mutuality, truth, sincerity, and in particular a concern for others. It keeps reminding us that we are creatures of choice and need to be taught carefully so that we can make wise choices. We can not only learn by others' mistakes, but by our own as well—thus, saving ourselves much pain and trouble.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

These books can remind us that all men need a set of standards by which to measure character, conduct, and the actions of others. If we are wise, then, we can live well and worthily and find happiness and contentment in this life. We can even chose to live for something beyond ourselves. ***“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels...”*** (Proverbs 1:5). The Lord knows how desperately we need His Wisdom!

REVIEW QUESTIONS**True or False**

- 1. Books of Poetry are the collected knowledge of wise men of the past.**
- 2. The Song of Solomon is a love song between two people.**
- 3. The Psalms were all written by David.**
- 4. The book of Job is a fictional story.**
- 5. All the Psalms are Poetry written to be sung as praise to God.**
- 6. Lamentation is a strong theme running throughout the Psalms.**
- 7. Job and Ecclesiastes take two different approaches to the problems of life.**
- 8. The Psalms do have some wisdom literature in it.**
- 9. There are six books of Poetry.**
- 10. Some seven different persons are named as author of the Psalms.**

Lesson Two

“Learning Patience with Job”
(Job 1-21)

There will be two lessons on the book of Job. Please try to read the book in connection with these two lessons. The man Job appears as one of the three greatest men of faith in the Old Testament History (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). The book of Job portrays him as **“no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”** (1:8). This book is about a devout “Gentile,” not a Jew or Israelite. It is believed that Job lived about the time of Abraham or possibly close to the time of Moses. There is not enough Biblical information to determine this with any certainty. The book begins with prose and ends with prose, but in the middle is one of the greatest poems of all time. The book naturally divides itself into four sections:

- 1) **Introduction (chs. 1-2).** This sets the scene for the great debate about suffering and introduces the characters to be involved.
- 2) **Main Body (chs. 3-37).** It deals with Job’s reaction to his calamities. Then, it also deals with Job’s friends’ reactions and advice to Job. It shows Job’s reactions to his friends’ remarks. And then, it deals with Job’s desire to stand before God to be vindicated.
- 3) **The Two Great Speeches of God (chs. 38-41).**
- 4) **Conclusion (ch. 42).** Job is vindicated and his friends rebuked. Then, God blesses Job even more than before. It is interesting to note that the reader is given the background as to why Job was made to suffer, but Job himself was not given the answer.

THE QUESTION OF SUFFERING

Poetry is often used to express deep emotion. Also, figurative language seems to broaden man’s means of expressing himself. The book deals with the timeless problem—*“Why do the innocent suffer?”* It is not just about the why of suffering, but the why the innocent are made to suffer. The general perception of mankind is that the righteous are rewarded for doing right and good, while the wicked are punished for doing wrong and bad. This, they believe, is true in this life, as well as after death. But the problem is—life is not that simple! If we keep parroting out what is passed down from past generations without question, we may be making a mistake. For if they did not learn from their experiences, then, of what value is their answer. To try to boil the complexity of life down into a simple formula cannot be done without grave problems. It may appear to work at times, but at other times reality may do the correcting of our simplistic ideas. If Job had held to the simplistic idea of his friends, he soon came down out of the clouds of theory and simple answers. He came down hard into reality. It just isn’t that way all the time. Job’s suffering did not fit the neat little rule handed down by others—especially his friends. Job discovered a very obvious fact—the righteous often suffer horribly for no apparent reason!

Man’s challenge, then, is to find an answer to this dilemma! Why does a just and loving God deal thusly with His creatures? Why doesn’t He conform to the simple rule that the

righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished? Just how can a man still believe and trust in, respect, and worship a God that seems to be acting unjustly towards His creatures?

Job's wife, in a moment of great weakness, gave one possible answer for man: ***“Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die.”*** (2:9). In your extreme frustration, lash out at God! Indict Him for His unjustness. You might as well recognize an obvious fact that when a vindictive God is after you, you don't stand a chance! So, just give up, stop trying! What is the use? Just quit!

WHY ACCEPT WRONG ADVICE?

1. Because of the greatness of the catastrophe. People often give up on God too easily even when the events are small. How much more when the events are horribly great! Look at what happened to Job:

- a) His home went from scenes of peacefulness, love, happiness, contentment, assurance, and security.....
- b) In a very short time to one of great desolation of all his worldly goods—total loss; extreme pain and discomfort of his whole body being stricken with boils (just nigh of death).

And then when you look again and see that some of these losses came from wicked men who would prosper in his loss.....and even worse, some losses came from a power above man that Job could have no control over if he had had an opportunity to be involved. Such can sorely put one's faith to trial!

2. Because of the feeling of total frustration. Frustration comes because there are no answers as to why these things are happening. There is no way to go—no where to turn for help or hope—if one turns from God. There is no way out, so, just give up!

3. Because of discouragement from those closest to us. Job's wife saw no further reason for believing in a Just God. She pointed an accusing finger at God's irresponsible acts. She wallowed in self-pity—so, just quit and give up!

HOW SHOULD WE COPE WITH SUCH GREAT TRIALS?

1. He must naturally and reasonably bow down in great sorrow over such calamity! People in that day showed such by rending their garments and shaving their heads. ***“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.”*** (1:20).

2. He must naturally and reasonably turn to the God who made him. He must turn in faith, trust, and integrity in spite of the calamities. He must turn and worship Him who has created all things, who gives freely, but can also take away. We come into the world naked, and we shall go out the same way. All that we have was given from God and He has the right to take it away.

“Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.” (1:21). Our faith does not and must

not rest upon what God does at any one moment, but who He ever is! We can never fully know the mind and ways of God!

3. He must accept, with patient resignation, God's will in his life. Job said: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* He had only returned to what he had originally before God gave these things to him. His departure from this life was to be sooner or later anyway. He recognized his dependence upon God for all he had had. He resigned to endure whatever God brought upon him.

4. He must determine that he will not act foolishly towards God! *"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."* (1:22). *"You speak as one of the foolish women speak."* (2:10). *"In all this did not Job sin with his lips."* (2:10). To turn one's back upon God was not the solution to these grave problems. Job's determination to continue his righteous living was the correct action. He retained his integrity. He continued living the kind of life for which God had praised him. Job was truly a righteous man and was determined to stay that way.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Catastrophic events can cause us to re-look at our philosophy of life. It can help us to realize what really does count in this life. Our faith needs to be tried to prove that it is true and not false. Such can help to deepen our realization that God cannot be placed in a little narrow box of man's limited understanding. May we be as prepared as Job was when our time comes for such trials!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

1. Job did not sin in all that he had to endure.
2. Job felt that the evil he received was from God.
3. Job shaved his head in the midst of all his problems.
4. Job's wife's attitude became a part of Job's temptation to give up on God.
5. Job's friends were trying to get him to accept the standard understanding that God blesses the righteous.
6. We can never fully know the mind and ways of God.
7. Job was never told why he suffered, and yet he trusted in God.
8. God tempts man to sin and rebel against Him.
9. Patience is a virtue because it has to be earned.
10. Man can be referred to as "righteous" before God.

Lesson Three

***“Is God Unrighteous
in Allowing the Innocent to Suffer?”***
(Job 22-42)

One of the great problem of the ages is dealt with in the book of Job—“**Why does man suffer?**” But it goes even further and ask, “**Why do the innocent suffer?**” The basic answer to the first question is that man suffers because of sin—his and others! But the answer to the second question is not so easily dealt with by the “wise” friends of Job. They thought their answer was simple and direct, but Job felt strongly otherwise.

In the first lesson on Job, we saw one way of trying to deal with such suffering. It was Job’s wife and her advice: “**Curse God, and die.**” But Job saw no point or purpose in charging God as unjust in His actions. Even though the majority of men may go that route, it is no solution at all to the question. Our study will look at an overview of the book and then see the remarkable conclusion.

THE TRYING OF JOB (Chapters 1-2)

Seven “persons” are involved in this great drama of life: God, Satan, Job, his Wife, and the three friends of Job. The first scene opens in the spiritual realm of existence where God and Satan are discussing Job. God ask Satan what he thought of His servant, Job; and Satan’s reply was: “*Who wouldn’t serve you when blessed as Job was!*” So God allows Satan to go the full limit against Job, except to spare his life. The calamities that befell Job and his wife were great:

1. A total loss of all of their possessions.
2. The total loss of their children.
3. Job’s body affected from head to toe with boils.

It is in the midst of Job’s suffering that the writer of Job gives insight as to why Job was suffering. It was to test his faithfulness to God. However, Job was not given the reason here or at the end either that I can find.

Three of his friends come to comfort him in his crisis. They expressed their horror over such terrible events in their traditional way. They sat in silence with Job for seven days, waiting politely for Job to speak. All is now ready for the great debate to begin.

JOB BREAKS HIS SILENCE (Chapter 3)

His pent-up anguish and despair gushes forth like an oil well being released. He cursed the day of his birth (3:1). If such is life, it would have been better not to have been born (3:3). Why doesn’t death come to the one that longs for it (3:20)? But his agony and misery is made worse by his inability to understand why. How can such come from the hand of a just God? The challenge is to harmonize God’s nature with all that happens—such is not easy.

THE GREAT DEBATE (Chapters 4-31)

The arguments of Job's three friends. They consistently picture God's punishment of the wicked for sin (4:7-8). Their conclusion is that Job is suffering because of his sins. This is God's Law and God's Way. They started out by saying that Job had been a tower of strength to others who suffered, but now he is in the same condition and he is faltering (4:3-5). They accused Job of trying to justify himself and inferred that God was unjust by his remarks. They reminded Job that only God is perfectly good (4:17-19). Therefore, man can expect to suffer because he sins (5:7). It is unthinkable that God would pervert justice and allow Job to suffer unjustly (8:3, 20; 22:2-3). They pointed out that Job's wild accusations against God are proof of his sinful pride (15:5-6). And he must know that he cannot hide his sins from God. They challenged Job to admit his sin and repent and God would be merciful. They suggest to him that his suffering is really less than what he deserved (11:6). For Job to pretend to be righteous and blameless is pure hypocrisy; and to continue in this way will only bring ultimate doom. His friends stubbornly maintained with rigidity his sinfulness, which drove Job to distraction.

Job's arguments for his cause. Job starts out by rebuking his so-called comforters. His suffering was real, horrible, and he needed comfort, not rebuke (6:14). It was so bad that he longed for death more than once (6:9; 7:14; 14:13). To Job, his condition seemed to be hopeless (7:6). He rebukes his friends by saying: "*You think you are wise, but you haven't shown it by your actions* (17:10). He concludes that he is in the midst of mockers, not comforters (17:2, 4). And he adds: "*And I would not do that to you*" (16:1-5). His advice to them was to have pity on him...why persecute me more than I already am? (19:21-22). He challenges them, "*Show me my wrong and I will be silent*" (6:24). He reminds them that he knows what they know, so be silent if you have no help to offer (13:2, 4-5). Then, he calls on them to plead with me to God, if I have truly erred. You are continually reminding me of God's punishment of the wicked, but when you look around, do you see any exceptions to the rule (Ch. 21). Job said that he has seen the wicked prosper, but they will be judged of God (Ch. 24).

Since no help comes from his friends, he turns to God. He pleads for God to forgive any transgression and remove his bond of affliction (7:20-21). He would like to plead his case before God, but knowing all the time that no one can successfully indict God (9:2-3). What he cannot understand is why God lets a man suffer without letting him know why (10:2). So Job is determined to plead his innocence before God believing that he would be exonerated (23:1-7). He knows that the wicked will be punished for their sins. The true wisdom is to fear the Lord and depart from evil (28:28). He concludes by stating his faith in God (19:25). He has clearly stated that though the Lord would slay him, he would trust Him (13:15). He acknowledges God's greatness and remembers the good things that God had blessed him with in the past (Chs. 29:30). He continued to uphold his integrity before God and man (Ch. 31).

THE SPEECHES OF A NEWCOMER (Elihu) (Chs. 32-37)

Elihu admits that the three friends of Job had not answered or convinced Job of sin (32:12). He calls for Job to listen to his words of wisdom. He told Job that he was wrong in claiming to be innocent before God and you need to repent and pray to God (33:27-28). He accused Job of

saying that it does not profit to delight in God (34:9), and that it is wrong to accuse God of wickedness (34:12). He reminds Job that it is better to let God show you your wickedness and turn away (34:31-32). Instead of doing this, you have added rebellion unto your sin (34:37). He tells Job that he seems to be inferring that his righteousness is more than God's (35:2). So, he challenges God to look at God, compare yourself with him, and be humbled. He concludes by saying that man will never fully find out God's ways....so fear him (37:23-24).

GOD FACES JOB WITH SOME CHALLENGES (Chs. 38-41)

God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind (38:1)....."*Who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*" (38:2). He calls for Job to get ready for He has some questions for him to try to answer. God proceeds to give a long list of questions about creation and God's creatures. Then, He challenges Job to speak up if he knows the answers; if not, then he needs to keep silence. Job admits his vileness before God, and says he will speak no longer (40:4-5). But God does not stop here, but continues to show Job's lack of knowledge. He, again, ask Job some questions. Will you take my place as ruler of the universe? Will you take control and rule more justly than I? Will you be clothed with greater majesty than Myself? On and on the questions come that keeps humbling Job.

THE CONCLUSION (Ch. 42)

Job finally reacts to God's questions by admitting that God is all superior and that he had uttered what he did not know. "*I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!*" (42:6). It was obvious that God's questions did not answer Job's question, but they were meant to bring awe into Job's heart—and it did!

God then turns and rebukes Job's three friends. He commands them to take sacrifices to Job to be offered for them, and then let Job pray for them (42:7-8). Job is thus exonerated before his friends and God restores to Job twice what he had before (42:10).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Self-righteous friends make very poor comforters. So, people who think they are so wise and have all the answers need to let God ask them a question or two. We don't need to know all about how God runs His universe! We don't need all the answers, but to put our trust in God. The good may have to suffer along with the bad at times, but the good need to retain their personal integrity and humility and not charge God foolishly. We need to be completely committed to truth, love and goodness. We need to accept what God brings into our lives believing that God is just in all His ways. Let's profit by what Job learned!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

1. Comforting the afflicted is done by rebuking them for their sins.
2. Satan has access into the presence of God.

-
- ___ 3. An underlying issue in all of these problems that Job had was the question” *“Does it pay to serve God?”*
- ___ 4. Silence in the presence of great calamities was expected of those who visited Job.
- ___ 5. Job’s friends were certain that his calamities came because of grievous sin in his life.
- ___ 6. Job’s friends interpreted Job’s questioning of God as accusing God of being unjust.
- ___ 7. Job rebuked his friends by saying, *“If you don’t have an answer, then keep silent.”*
- ___ 8. In spite of Job’s suffering, he was still assured that the wicked would be punished.
- ___ 9. Elihu did not think that Job’s three friends were effective in dealing with Job’s problem.
- ___ 10. God’s questions are designed to humble arrogant mankind.

Lesson Four

“The Cry of the Poor, Afflicted, and Humble” (Psalm 1-20)

We will have six lessons on the Psalms. In this lesson (Psalms 1-20) we will be looking at an overview of the Psalms briefly and end it with a discussion on the question: “*Will God hear the Cry of the Poor, Afflicted, and the Humble?*” The Psalms are writings that have been arranged to be sung. While it is certain that David is the inspired author of most of the Psalms, it is believed that the present arrangement of Psalms was finalized by Ezra and Nehemiah.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PSALMS

Many of these Psalms can be used by God’s people today in our worship assemblies. These are songs that express the emotions of the heart, such as:

- 1) Thanksgiving, Triumph, Praise Adoration, Confidence, Discouragement, Desolation, Penitence, Humiliation, Humility, and a cry for Deliverance.
- 2) These Psalms express a deep abiding love for God, His Law, and the joy of meditation upon His Law.
- 3) They express a conviction of the certainty of God’s eternal purposes.
- 4) They give recognition to the brevity and frailty of human life.
- 5) They express patriotism, as well as, exultation over the triumph over one’s enemies.
- 6) They express man’s passion for truth, justice, righteousness, as well as his desire for the nearness of God.
- 7) They help us to see what our attitudes should be like in worship: Submissiveness, reverence, obedience to a Sovereign Lord, trust, honesty and courage to a faithful and dependable God, and joyful, penitence, and adoration to a God of goodness and grace.
- 8) They help us to see that God is worthy as an object of worship, and that we should bare our soul before him to receive His blessings.

The Psalms have intellectual value to us as well. They reveal to us the heart and soul of the true worshipper of God. Deep insights are given to us by the use of David’s life and experiences with God. There is also a greater conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus from the prophetic statements that have been fulfilled.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PSALMS 1-20

This section has some very well-known Psalms in it that have been useful to God’s people over the years.

- 1) Psalm 1—This Psalm has a classic contrast between the wicked and the righteous man and their destiny.
- 2) Psalm 8—This is a well-known Psalm on the glory of man as God made him... ***“What is man that You are mindful of him...?”***
- 3) Psalm 15—This Psalm pictures the ideal citizen—a righteous person.

- 4) Psalm 19—One of the best known Psalm on the glory of God’s creation and His Law. ***“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.”***

Two of these Psalms have a strong Messianic emphasis:

- 1) Psalm 2—Many believe this Psalm in its entirety is Messianic. ***“Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”*** It describes opposition by both Jew and Gentile to the church, the kingdom of heaven. It describes Christ’s victory over all their efforts. It describes the preaching of the gospel to all nations, and that the call is for both the high and the low in all nations.
- 2) Psalm 16:8-10—This Psalm deals with the resurrection of Jesus as quoted in Acts 2.

PRIMARY THEME OR THRUST OF PSALMS 1-20

There is a vivid contrast between the righteous and the wicked from beginning to end. Psalms 1 begins with this contrast and is picked up throughout this section of the Psalms.

1) **Who is a righteous man?**

- a) One who will put his trust in God (16:1).
- b) One who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful (1:1).
- c) One who delights in the Law of God and meditates on it day and night (1:2).
- d) One who stands in awe of God (4:4).
- e) One who offers the sacrifices of righteousness (4:5).
- f) One who walks uprightly and speaks truth (15:2).
- g) One who does not backbite, nor do evil to his neighbor, nor reproaches him (15:3).
- h) One who despises the vile, but honors those that fear the Lord (15:4).
- i) One willing to take loss to help others, who lends money without interest, and takes no reward against the innocent (15:4-5).
- j) One who does not put away God’s Word, nor departs from God (18:21-22).

2) **Who is an unrighteous man?**

- a) One who sets himself against God (2:2).
- b) One who turns God’s glory into shame; loves vanity; and seeks after falsehood (4:2).
- c) Those who are bloody and deceitful (5:6).
- d) One who is not faithful to their word, wicked hearts, throat is an open sepulcher, and a flatterer (5:9).
- e) One who persecutes the poor, who is covetous, proud, and does not seek after God (10:3-4).
- f) One whose mouth is full of cursing, deceit, fraud, mischief, and vanity (10:7).
- g) One who murders innocent people and takes the poor as a snare (10:8-10).
- h) One who loves and promotes violence (11:5).
- i) One who denies God’s existence, does abominable works, and whose life does not have good works (14:1-3).

Closely tied in with this contrast is the age-old problem of why God allows the wicked to persecute the poor, the fatherless, and the righteous. The following references will illustrate how the Psalmists feels about such actions: 3:1-2; 7:1-2; 10:1-2; 13:1-2. It should be obvious that God

allows much evil in this world and does not act quickly to revenge the innocent. But in His own good time and place He will; but, meanwhile, man draws weary of waiting. Here is where the grave danger is—that of losing faith in the righteousness of God.

The Psalmists recognizes this as a challenge and so states his faith and trust in God in spite of such events: 9:9-10, 12; 10:14; 11:7; 13:5-6.

He then calls upon God to exonerate the righteous and punish the wicked: 17:7-9, 13-15; 2:4-5; 5:11-12; 7:11; 9:17-18.

He mixes in among these thoughts praise to God for His loving-kindness and mercy: 9:11-12; 13:6; 18:46-49.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Psalms have much to offer for us today when viewed in the light of the above thoughts. They need to be read and meditated upon for our soul's sake. Man is pictured as foolish that refuses to see his need of God and of His help.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

1. The present arrangement of the Psalms is believed to have been finalized around 450-500 BC.
2. The Psalms have so much value for us today because they deal with the challenging problems of mankind.
3. The Psalms express a full-range of emotions of people.
4. The Psalms not only deal with things spiritual, but some of them are patriotic.
5. The Psalms help us to see how to worship God correctly.
6. The Psalms have no prophesy in them about the coming Messiah.
7. God's creation declares the glory of God.
8. A righteous person is one who meditates on God's Word day and night.
9. The Psalms give assurance that God does care about the poor and fatherless.
10. God allows evil in the world for a purpose.

Lesson Five

“Praise to God for His Many Blessings”
(Psalms 21-41)

This is the second lesson of six that we will be looking at covering the Psalms. Just from this brief review of the contents of these writings, it should be obvious that we can greatly profit from them today. It is important that you read these Psalms yourself and evaluate and study their thoughts. In addition to looking at some thoughts about the Psalms in general, we will look at the Messianic statements in this section, and then end with how the Psalmist praises or extols God for His many blessings.

ARRANGEMENT AND ASCRIPTIONS OF THE PSALMS

It has already been suggested that the present arrangement of the Psalms were believed to have been finalized by Ezra and Nehemiah from about 450-500 BC. They have been divided into five sections, but we will be looking at them in a little different arrangement. Following are the sections: (1) Psalm 1-41; (2) Psalm 42-72; (3) Psalm 73-89; (4) Psalm 90-106; (5) Psalm 107-150. Scholars are not certain as to why these Psalms are arranged in this order....but there is a lot of opinion expressed. Without firm factual evidence, it is just guesses.

Most of the Psalms have at the top an ascription telling who the writer was. I am not sure of how reliable they are. They can be pin-pointed back to the 2nd and 3rd Centuries B.C. This can be found in the LXX (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). They could possibly date back to the time of Ezra. So, it is important that these ascriptions are used with some reservation.

MESSIANIC REFERENCES IN PSALMS 21-41

One of the great values of the Old Testament Scriptures is the foretelling of the coming of a Messiah (an Anointed One of God) that would come to bless all families of the earth (Genesis 22:18). Along with this emphasis are many detailed descriptions of this Messiah, His work, His lineage, etc. The Psalms have their share of this prophetic references as can be seen in the following passages:

- 1) Psalm 22:1—Jesus’ cry on the cross.
- 2) Psalm 22:6-8—The mockers against Jesus while on the cross.
- 3) Psalm 22:13—What the mockers will say against Jesus.
- 4) Psalm 22:16-18—His hands and feet to be pierced and they would cast lots for his garment.
- 5) Psalm 22:22—This is quoted in Hebrews 2:12 with reference to Jesus.
- 6) Psalm 31:5—A saying of Jesus on the cross.
- 7) Psalm 34:20—Not a bone of his body to be broken.
- 8) Psalm 35:11—There would be false witnesses at Jesus’ trial before crucifixion.
- 9) Psalm 35:19—Quoted in John 15:25 by Jesus.
- 10) Psalm 40:6-8—Quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7 with reference to Jesus.
- 11) Psalm 41:9—Jesus quotes this passage with reference to Judas betraying him.

SOME SPECIAL EMPHASIS IN PSALMS 21-41

Several of these Psalms are well-known, some are generally familiar, and over-all have some important concepts brought out in them.

- 1) Psalm 22 is strongly Messianic in connection with the crucifixion.
- 2) Psalm 23 is the well-beloved Shepherd Psalm.
- 3) Psalm 32 talks about the blessedness of forgiveness.
- 4) Psalm 34 is quoted often in the New Testament (11-14, 15-16, 18).
- 5) Psalm 24 is very familiar to most of us—in particularly—(4, 7-10).
- 6) Psalm 25:1 has a song that we sing writer about it.
- 7) Psalm 37 also has some familiar passages (1-2, 5, 11, 23-24, 25).
- 8) Psalm 39:4-5 is a very sobering passage.

PSALMS 21-41 ALSO HAS A STRONG EMPHASIS UPON PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS ABUNDANT BLESSINGS

- 1) Psalm 21 begins with enumerating those blessings and ends with praise (13).
- 2) Psalms 22:22-26 talks about God hearing and delivering the afflicted, and exhorts all to call upon him to praise Him.
- 3) Psalm 28:6 also emphasizes that God hears and blesses such.
- 4) Psalm 30:1-5 expresses the idea of extolling God and lifting up His Name among all peoples. The reason given for this is that He lifted man up and saved his soul from death. He calls upon on peoples to praise the Lord.
- 5) Psalm 34:1-3 expresses the thought of praising or blessing God at all times. He then calls upon others to magnify the Lord with him....exalting His Name together.
- 6) Psalm 35:27-28 seems to be at the height of magnifying and praising God.
- 7) Psalm 40:16 again calls upon all to magnify the Lord of blessings.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Special insights are given in the following passages: (22:5; 26:6; 27:14; 30:5; 38:9). These are well worth memorizing. We need to remember that the Psalms are expressing for us how we ought to see life and our relationship to God, as well as, how grateful we ought to be for the manifold blessings He gives us.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

- ___ 1. The Psalms are expressing what should be in the heart of the child of God.
- ___ 2. There is a strong emphasis upon praising God for his bountiful blessings in this section of the Psalms.
- ___ 3. The ascriptions above the Psalms tell us who the writer was.
- ___ 4. The 22nd Psalm has a strong Messianic emphasis.
- ___ 5. The 40th Psalm is quoted in Hebrews 1:2 with reference to Jesus.

- 6. The 32nd Psalm emphasizes the blessedness of forgiveness.**
- 7. There is a song written about Psalm 25:1.**
- 8. The well-known Shepherd Psalm is found in Psalm 24.**
- 9. The 37th Psalm begins with the admonition, don't fret or be envious of evildoers and workers of iniquity.**
- 10. The 39th Psalm states that man at his best is but vapor.**

Lesson Six

“A Broken and Contrite Spirit”**(Psalm 42-72)**

Some of the greatest concepts of the “God-man Relationship,” as it ought to be, are found in the Psalms. David, in particular, was chosen by God to write most of the Psalms for that very reason. David is said to have been a man after God’s own heart! His life, his attitude towards God, and his character were all used by God to write about the things that affect man’s relationship to God. This section of the Psalms (42-72) helps to illustrate this concept most of all.

TYPES OF THE PSALMS

Various efforts have been made to categorize the Psalms. One of those efforts has three sections or divisions:

- 1) First two major divisions (1-41) (42-72) are more mournful.
- 2) The next two major divisions (73-89) (90-106) are more historical.
- 3) The last division (107-150) is more jubilant.

Another effort to categorize the types of the Psalms ended up with at least ten different types. The Psalms that are listed are illustrative, but not all that could be placed in each type.

- 1) Praise (8, 18, 19, 104, 145, 147).
- 2) Nationalistic (105, 106, 114).
- 3) Temple Worship (15, 24, 87).
- 4) Trials and Calamities (9, 22, 35, 36, 56, 109).
- 5) Messianic (2, 16, 40, 72, 110).
- 6) Arranged Alphabetically (9, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145, (10))
- 7) Penitential (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143)
- 8) Historical Background:
 - a) 3 (2 Samuel 15).
 - b) 24 (2 Samuel 6:10-15).
 - c) 56 (1 Samuel 21:10-15)
 - d) 75-76 (2 Kings 19:32-37).
 - e) 109 (1 Samuel 27:9-23).
 - f) 74 (2 Kings 25:2-18).
 - g) 60 (1 Chronicles 18:11-13).
- 9) Vindictive (35, 69, 109, 5:10, 28:4, 40:14-15, 55:16, 58:6, 9, 79:6-12).
 - a) These must be seen in a national context.
 - b) It calls upon vengeance or judgment of God for justice to be done and for the enemies of God to be put down.
 - c) Such comes from a heart of the highest love of truth, righteousness, and goodness.
 - d) It comes from a heart that is jealous of God’s honor and one who hates iniquity.
 - e) But he also prays for the wicked to be turned back to God.
- 10) General Religious character (89, 90, 91, 121, 127).

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PSALMS 42-72

1. Better known Psalms in this section:

- a) Psalm 42, 63 (Man seeking after God—42:1-2; 63:1-3).
- b) Psalm 46 (God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble).
- c) Psalm 51 (Earnest prayer for mercy and forgiveness).

2. Better known verses in this section:

- a) Psalm 43:3, 5 (Truth and Hope emphasized)
- b) Psalm 44:22 (Suffering as children of God)
- c) Psalm 46:1-3, 10 (God is our refuge—be still and know that He is God)
- d) Psalm 49:16-19 (Don't envy the rich—his end will come)
- e) Psalm 50:21 (Man thinks God is like himself)
- f) Psalm 53:1-3 (The fools say there is no God)
- g) Psalm 55:6, 22 (On the wings of a dove I will fly to a place of rest)
- h) Psalm 56:4 (In God I have put my trust)
- i) Psalm 57:7 (My heart is steadfast)
- j) Psalm 61:1-3 (Lead me to the rock that is higher than I)
- k) Psalm 66:18 (If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me)
- l) Psalm 71:1 (Trust in the Lord and let me never be ashamed)

3. Messianic Psalms and Phrases:

- a) Psalm 72 (Generally considered to be mostly Messianic. It is describing the reign of the Messianic King).
- b) Psalm 45:6-7 (Establishes Jesus' Deity—Hebrews 1:8-9 quotes it).
- c) Psalm 68:18 (Quoted in Ephesians 4:8).
- d) Psalm 69:9 (Quoted in John 2:17 and Romans 15:3).
- e) Psalm 69:21 (Quoted in Matthew 27:34).

LESSONS FROM PSALM 51:1-17

Psalm 51:1-4 (Earnest Prayer for Mercy and Forgiveness):

- 1) He calls for God to pity him.
- 2) He wants his transgressions blotted out and to be washed clean.
- 3) He has not forgotten his sin, but keeps it in mind—showing true repentance.
- 4) He freely confesses his sin.
- 5) Sin is not only against fellow-man, but more important against God.

Psalm 51:5-12 (Entreaty for Restoration and Renewal):

- 1) He recognizes he was born into a world of sin and wickedness.
- 2) In contrast God is a God of truth and wisdom.
- 3) He needs cleansing from the contamination of sin.
- 4) So, he calls for God to wash him and make him whiter than snow.
- 5) He desires to have a deep sense of Restoration into God's presence.
- 6) He calls for God to make him whole again.
- 7) He desires for God to turn His face from his evil deeds.
- 8) He calls upon God to create in him a clean heart—to renew a right spirit within him.

- 9) He pleads with God not to cast him away from His presence, even though he deserves such.
- 10) He calls upon God not to take His Holy Spirit from him. (David was given the Spirit at his anointing. His sins had grieved God's Spirit. A lack of repentance would have caused the Spirit to leave him.
- 11) He calls for God to again give him that sense of joy of being in his favor.

Psalm 51:13-17 (His promises to God)

- 1) David's tongue will not be silent about the great mercy of God.
- 2) He will exalt God before others.
- 3) He even prays for God to help him do his promise.
- 4) He recognizes that God's delight is not in animal sacrifices, but in reality—a broken and contrite heart!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Mercy comes to those who recognize their sinfulness before God and who are willing to turn to God for that mercy and forgiveness. There must be that willingness to freely confess their sin or sins and petition God's forgiveness.

We are promised that a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. That He will forgive and restore us again to His fellowship. And then, we should seek occasion to tell others about the mercy and love of God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

1. God's greatest delight is in man's sincerely offering animal sacrifices.
2. The person who has been forgiven of God cannot help to tell others of such.
3. The 51st Psalm is about David's sin with Bathsheba.
4. David must have been given the Holy Spirit in a special way different from us.
5. Psalm 45:6-7 is quoted in the New Testament to prove the virgin birth of Christ.
6. Psalm 44:22 talks about sheep being slaughtered for sacrifices.
7. Trials and calamities are dealt with in several of the Psalms.
8. Some Psalms are dealing with historical events that we can identify in the books of history of the Old Testament.
9. Some Psalms seem to be more nationalistic in identifying with the nation of Israel.
10. The Psalmists in some places are actually calling on God to put down their enemies.
11. God's people could actually be forgiven of sin under the Old Covenant system.
12. There is a sense of joy when we are in God's favor.

Lesson Seven

“Dealing With Doubt”

(Psalms 73-89)

A fourth Century writer remarked about the Psalms: *“Although all Divine Scripture breathes the grace of God; yet, sweet beyond all others is the Book of Psalms. History instructs, the Law teaches, Prophecy announces, Rebuke chastens, and Morality persuades; (but) in the Book of the Psalms we have the fruit of all these, and a kind of medicine for the salvation of man.”* God’s Word teaches God’s people to repent, avoid evil, and give thanks always. But the Psalms teach us **how** to repent, **how** to avoid evil, and **how** and for what to give thanks. The Psalms are designed to stir up and inflame our hearts to:

- a) A greater affection for God;
- b) A greater zeal in serving Him;
- c) A higher praise of His Greatness;
- d) And a higher spiritual plane of living!

Our time can be well spent in reading and meditating on the Psalms. This study will be looking at Psalms 73-89.

UNIQUE PSALMS THAT DEPICT DAVID’S LIFE

It is believed that at least half of the Psalms were written by David, if not more. But from those that are ascribed to him, we can pinpoint approximately where they fit into his life. They, then, give additional insights to his life beyond what the historical accounts give to us. His life is divided into five parts with Psalms that fit into each, as illustrated below:

- 1) Before his ascension to the throne (14).
- 2) The first part of his reign before his great sins (19).
- 3) From his great sins to his flight from Jerusalem (10).
- 4) During his exile from Jerusalem (10).
- 5) From his return to Jerusalem unto the close of his reign (3).

Studying these Psalms along with the five different periods of David’s life would prove to be an insightful study.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PSALMS 73-89

There seems to be no Messianic references in this section. Possibly, the closest thing to it would be Psalm 87 that is extolling the glories of Zion or Jerusalem. Also, there are no well-known Psalms like in the other sections. Most of these were written by Asaph or one of his descendants. They mostly deal with the overthrow of the enemies of Israel and with the sinfulness and unbelief of Israel. However, there are several special verses that would merit our attention:

- 1) Psalm 77:6 (When trouble and doubt arise, it is time to remember the good times. We need to remember the times when the nights brought songs, not sadness).
- 2) Psalm 78:36-37 (These demonstrate the hypocrisy of the people. While these verses are not quoted in the New Testament, they are similar to the ones that are quoted).

- 3) Psalm 78:49 (“Angel” can be translated “Messenger.” *“He loosed upon them the violence of his anger, wrath and enmity and rage, launching those messengers of evil to open a way for his fury.”* (NEB). This context is talking about how God punished the Egyptians to cause them to let His people go. The messengers were not evil, but brought terrible things upon the Egyptians).
- 4) Psalm 82:6 (This probably has reference to their judges among them. They were not God, Deity, but men in positions of Authority over other men, to judge them. Their exalted position will not save them from their own just punishment).
- 5) Psalm 86:13 (This has a footnote: *“worse possible state.”* The New English Bible has *“From the depths of sheol.”* There seems to be no doubt of a concept of punishment after death).
- 6) Psalm 89:7 (The Psalms continually tell of the Excellencies of God and His worthiness of reverence and worship. God is to be greatly revered and respected in our assemblies).

SPECIAL STUDY OF 73rd PSALM

This Psalm begins with the praise of God for His goodness to the clean of heart (73:1). But there is a problem—his faith was shaken by the success and prosperity of the wicked. As a result, he almost slipped from his rock of faith into the abyss of skepticism. He almost let materialism blind him to God’s goodness to the righteous (73:2). The Psalmist now describes what he saw that shook him up (73:3-12):

- 1) He saw the wicked prosper.
- 2) They die quickly without suffering.
- 3) They are in their strength when they die.
- 4) They are not chastened as God does to the righteous for their good.
- 5) All of this causes them to be proud.
- 6) They become violent in their pride.
- 7) They have all that their heart wants.
- 8) They boast of their condition and despise the condition of the righteous.
- 9) They speak as those whose words are Law, as though from God.
- 10) They gather great followings to do their evil biddings.
- 11) They even question whether God knows or cares what is happening.
- 12) They greatly prosper in riches.

In the next verses (73:13-16), he describes his reaction to these things and also describes his wrestling with the problem. His first reaction is: *“I have lived righteously in vain!”* He realizes that he is plagued all day long and the wicked are not. So, what does it profit to be righteous? He was tempted to speak out his thoughts, but realized it would only do harm to others, so he remained silent. When he tried to reason things out, it was too difficult for him.

He next shows how he was enlightened over this matter in 73:17-20). It came when he went into the Sanctuary of God. He realized that in order to make proper judgment of such men, you must see their end. He describes their true condition as:

- 1) They are in slippery places with no sure hold on to their possessions.
- 2) When their fall comes, it is destruction in this life or punishment after death.

- 3) Their fall is often very quick and with great terror.
- 4) When God does take action, it will be terrible.

He now concludes his thoughts on this problem by reflecting upon his own condition that caused the problem to begin with (73:21-24).

- 1) He was too full of grief and bitterness to consider the matter calmly.
- 2) There was a problem of passionate discontent in his soul.
- 3) He was like a brute beast, not able to reason aright.
- 4) He realized that he was still fully with God, and thus, he did not fall away.
- 5) He was upheld by God from falling.
- 6) He was assured of God's loving guidance through it all.
- 7) He looks beyond death to that ultimate glory God gives to His people.

He then gives his final statements about his confidence and trust in God (73:25-28).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Psalms are constantly calling upon us to place our trust in God. We are to do so in spite of the things that we see about us that tend to cause doubt. We must realize that God is still in control! The end of the story hasn't come yet...but it will someday!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

- ___ 1. To trust in God is required when we cannot see the reason or find an answer for things that happen in our lives that are not desirable.
- ___ 2. To be discontent leaves us open for doubt and despair.
- ___ 3. Grief and bitterness can open the door for strong temptations to disbelief.
- ___ 4. The rich do not boast of their prosperity.
- ___ 5. Materialism can blind God's people to the true picture in life.
- ___ 6. The Psalms called judges "gods."
- ___ 7. The plagues upon the Egyptians were called messengers in Psalm 78.
- ___ 8. Psalm 86 is talking about punishment after death.
- ___ 9. The Psalms not only teach us what to do, but how to do it.
- ___ 10. David's Psalms that he wrote can be tied to the events in his life.

Lesson Eight

“Exaltation of Jehovah”
(Psalms 90-116)

We are deviating from the normal breakdown of the section of the Psalm in this lesson and will be covering chapters 90-116. The Psalms not only call upon God’s people to praise Him, but they give ample reasons for doing so. This section is mostly praise Psalms. You will find familiar phrases that have been picked up by song writers in our songbooks. The Psalms call upon men to repent and to confess their sinfulness, and then record for us how to express our repentance. Men are called to worship, praise and adore the God of Heaven. The Psalms indicate what to say in worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God. They indicate the kind of heart with which to worship as well. They even give the reasons behind that worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PSALMS 90-116**1. Outstanding Psalms:**

Psalm 90:2, 4, 10, 12 (These stress the difference between man’s transitoriness and God’s eternity).

Psalm 95:8-11 (The Psalmist calls upon man to worship and serve God rather than harden their hearts. This is quoted in Hebrews 3:7).

Psalm 103 (One of the great songs of praise and devotion to God. It reminds us of all He has done for mankind).

Psalm 104 (Another great song of praise to God. This gives a listing of His works in general to all mankind).

Psalm 105 (A praise of God for his goodness to his people Israel. It recalls God’s great acts of love (signs and miracles) which He did for His people. There is a strong emphasis upon His loving protection over them).

Psalm 106 (Another praise to God for His mercy. Israel had sinned over and over, but God was still willing to be merciful to the penitent. He recounts the many numerous times of sinning against God by His people).

Psalm 107 (This Psalm has a strong emphasis upon God’s goodness (verse 43)).

2. Messianic Psalms:

Psalm 91:11-12 (This is a possible reference to God’s care over His Son. At least the Devil quotes it and tries to get Jesus to cast Himself down from the Temple—tempting God).

Note: Several references are made in the New Testament from the Psalms with reference to Jesus (110:1, 4, etc.).

STRONG EMPHASIS UPON EXALTING JEHOVAH**The Nature of God as revealed in this section:**

- 1) Psalm 90:2—God is from everlasting to everlasting (Eternal Nature).
- 2) Psalm 90:4—A 1000 years is as one day (time with God is nothing).
- 3) Psalm 92:2—God shows loving-kindness and is faithful to His promises.

- 4) Psalm 92:5—Who can fathom the depths of God’s mind?
- 5) Psalm 92:8—God is higher than all (forever).
- 6) Psalm 93:1—God is clothed with Majesty and strength.
- 7) Psalm 93:5—You can count on God’s testimonies to be sure (He is a Holy God).
- 8) Psalm 96:6—Identified with Honor, Majesty, Strength, and Beauty.
- 9) Psalm 96:10—He is a righteous judge.
- 10) Psalm 97:6—He is righteous and glorious.
- 11) Psalm 99:3—God’s great Name is Holy.
- 12) Psalm 102:25-28—God created the heavens and earth. They shall perish, but God will endure. They will be changed, but God never changes—His years have no end.
- 13) Psalm 111:9—Holy and Reverend is His Name.

The Purpose for describing the Nature of God:

- 1) To show the great contrast between God and man.
 - a) God is everlasting—Man is temporary.
 - b) God created all things—Man is a part of that creation.
 - c) His Greatness, His Holiness, His Honor and Majesty are so far above that of man’s.
 - d) Therefore, man should worship his Creator.
- 2) To show the Great Character of God in His treatment of man.
 - a) He is a loving, merciful, and forgiving God.
 - b) Yet, He is just, righteous, and punishes man for his sin.
 - c) Psalm 107:15—*“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man tends to worship that which he considers greater than himself. He tends to express gratitude and praise to Him that is merciful to him. These Psalms give man ample reasons for the true and sincere worship of the one True and Living God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

- ___ 1. **Worship is natural for man.**
- ___ 2. **The greater the difference between man and the God he worships causes man to be more respectful in worship.**
- ___ 3. **Both the faithfulness of God and the Justice of God needs to be seen.**
- ___ 4. **God’s loving kindness or punishment of man depends upon man’s actions.**
- ___ 5. **The New Testament quotes some of these Psalms and uses them in reference to Jesus.**
- ___ 6. **The Psalms give us the How, What, and Why of worship.**
- ___ 7. **This section of the Psalms is mostly praise to God.**
- ___ 8. **Psalm 91:11-12 could be Messianic in nature.**

Lesson Nine

“Light from Heaven”
(Psalms 117-150)

This is the last lesson on the Psalms. This section covers a wide range of things, but it contains one of the strongest emphases upon the Word of God of any place in the Bible. After looking at some general things about the Psalms, and some observations about this section (117-150), we will look at the 119th Psalm.

AN OVER-VIEW OF THE PSALMS

The Psalms give recognition to only one, infinite, all-wise, omnipresent God. They recognize the universality of His love, providence, and goodness to mankind. And the Psalms were a perfect place to give insights, through prophecy, of the coming Divine Son of God and His Redemptive work. Many of the Psalms deal with the terrible nature of Sin, the Divine hatred of it, and the judgment of God upon sinners who will not repent. But, at the same time, they also speak of mercy and forgiveness to the penitent. They hold up and emphasize the necessity and beauty of a holy life. They continually show the importance of faith and trust in God and its importance to the soul’s privilege of communion with God.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PSALMS 117-150

This section seems to be a “catch-all”—a collection of the miscellaneous. They emphasize praise of God, patriotism, battle hymns, songs of triumph, prayer for victory over their enemy. There are also songs of adversity and despair and the seeking of comfort and consolation from God. There are also contrasts, such as listing the vices of the ungodly as compared to the uprightness of the righteous. These Psalms picture the godly man as one who walks uprightly, speaks truth, slanders not, keeps his promises, pays his debts, and keeps his heart pure and clean. Some of the Psalms deal with the age-old questions on the meaning of life and the brevity of life. It stresses that man shows wisdom by clean living and a right relationship with God. There are also questions about death and immortality. There are then insights to personal religious experiences such as:

- a) Struggles of the soul;
- b) Doubt, Fear, and wickedness;
- c) Agony, despair, and remorse;
- d) And the Joy of forgiveness, the peace of the soul, and the confidence in the restored fellowship with God.

There are songs for special occasions: Feasts days, Sheep shearing, Gathering of crops, Wedding feasts, etc. Several of our songs come from this section:

- a) Psalm 117 (Praise to God)
- b) Psalm 126:6 (Sowing and Reaping)
- c) Psalm 148 (All created things to Praise God).

Some of these songs were to be accompanied with instruments (Psalm 149:3 and Psalm 150:3-6). While the instruments' use was commanded in the Old Testament, the New Testament is strangely silent about such use in the church. There is no indication or inference for their use. The New Testament only has a specific reference to singing and making melody in one's heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

A most unusual Psalm (136) is one that has 26 verses that stresses the need and the things for which God should give thanks to God.....and each verse ends with the expression: ***“For His mercy endures forever...”*** What a way to emphasize God's mercy!

A LOOK AT PSALM 119

Statements in this Psalm are almost as well-known as the 23rd Psalm! It is an acrostic—that is, it takes each letter of the Hebrew alphabet to begin each section of the Psalm. Each section has eight verses. While several different ideas are dealt with, the main theme is God's Word, His Commandments, and His Truth! All these different ideas are related to the Word of God in some way. The following verses illustrate how the Word of God is held in high esteem.

- 1) v. 2—Blessed are those who keep His testimonies.
- 2) v. 11—Your word have I hidden in my heart.
- 3) v. 18—Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from your law.
- 4) v. 27—Make me understand the way of your precepts.
- 5) v. 40—I long for your precepts.
- 6) v. 46—I will speak of your testimonies also before kings.
- 7) v. 50—Your word has given me life.
- 8) v. 61—I have not forgotten your law.
- 9) v. 71-72—Your law is better than thousands of coins of gold and silver.
- 10) v. 80—Let my heart be blameless regarding your statutes.
- 11) v. 87—I did not forsake your precepts.
- 12) v. 89—Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.
- 13) v. 97, 103—Oh, how I love your Law...It is my meditation all the day. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.
- 14) v. 105—Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- 15) v. 116—Uphold me according to your word that I may live.
- 16) v. 127-128—I love your commandments more than fine gold.
- 17) v. 130—The entrance of your word gives light and understanding to the simple.
- 18) v. 140—Your Word is very pure and your servant loves it.
- 19) v. 151—All your commandments are truth.
- 20) v. 160—The entirety of your word is truth.
- 21) v. 162—I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure.
- 22) v. 173—I have chosen your precepts.

All of us need to seriously evaluate our own attitude towards the Word of God in view of these statements! The verses end with: ***“I do not forget Your commandments.”*** The great value of the word of God is stressed as being greater than great wealth. Wealth is needed to enjoy what this life has to offer, but the Word of God can make it possible to enjoy this life correctly and have heaven in addition.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Old Testament in general and the Psalms in particular have much to offer for us today that is valuable (Romans 15:4)! I hope that this brief over-view will help to convince you of this fact.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or false

1. The Psalms are valuable for us today.
2. The Word of God is compared to the sweetness of honey.
3. The 126th Psalm ends each verse with: *“For His mercy endures forever.”*
4. The 150th Psalm actually commands that the son be sung with instruments.
5. The 148th Psalm calls upon all creation to Praise God.
6. Death and immortality is actually dealt with in the Psalms.
7. We should not sing the Patriotic songs of the Psalms.
8. The 137th Psalm seems to be dealing with Israel in Babylonian Captivity.
9. Many of the Psalms in this section are called “Songs of Ascent.”
10. The 118th Psalm is quoted in the New Testament with reference to Christ being the stone that was rejected.

Lesson Ten

“The Exaltation of Wisdom and Knowledge” **(Proverbs 1-15)**

The book of Proverbs exalts wisdom and puts down folly! (15:20) It’s exaltation is seen in many different ways. This is one of the reasons why the term “Wisdom Literature” is used to identify this book along with Job and Ecclesiastes. The book has been divided into eight sections as follows:

- 1) The exaltation of Wisdom (Chs. 1-9).
- 2) Miscellaneous Proverbs of Solomon (Chs. 10:1-22:16).
- 3) Various duties and rules (Chs. 22:17-24:22).
- 4) Further sayings of the wise (Ch. 24:23-34).
- 5) Miscellaneous sayings by Solomon (Chs. 25:1-29:37).
- 6) The Words of Agur (Ch. 30:1-33).
- 7) The Words of Lemuel (Ch. 31:1-9).
- 8) The Acrostic in Praise of the Virtuous Woman (Ch. 31:10-31).

The main thrust of the proverbs is to exalt wisdom and understanding, which should be pursued above all things (4:6-9). But, in order for one to possess wisdom, he must fear the Lord (1:7; 9:10; 15:33). The understanding that leads to wisdom needs to start in the home (1:8-9). And there is a need to listen to the words of wise counselors (1:5-6). But such must be sought after (1:20-23).

A strong contrast is drawn between the Wise and the Simple (foolish, naïve). The wise man:

- 1) Is a learned person. He is a man with special skills that have been developed.
- 2) He has understanding. He is knowledgeable about things of life.
- 3) His mind is open, teachable—and wisdom is something to be taught.
- 4) He is knowledgeable because he has sought after wisdom and found her.
- 5) He is righteous—for his life reflects his possession of wisdom.

But now look at the contrast on the other side—the foolish, simple, or naïve person and how he is identified:

- 1) He is naïve, untutored, or untaught.
- 2) He is stupid, crude and obstinate.
- 3) He is brutal and depraved.
- 4) He is irrational, opinionated, and insolent.

THE MAKE-UP OF PROVERBS

There are at least seven different kinds of proverbs found in the book of Proverbs. These will be listed and a reference will be given to illustrate each of the kinds that are mentioned. See the following list:

- 1. Involves a Similitude (or a similar statement) (16:18).**
- 2. Involves comparisons (25:25).**

3. **Involves instructive sayings of wisdom** (4:23).
4. **Involves short Terse Maxims** (11:4).
5. **Involves Parables** (6:6-11).
6. **Involves Didactic Poems** (6:16-19).
7. **Most common form is called a Distich.** This is a verse of two lines. These can be used in three ways:
 - a) The idea in the first line is repeated in the second in a slightly altered form (4:24).
 - b) The second line may illustrate the first by presenting a contrast to it (10:1).
 - c) A distinct truth may be presented in each line with little or no connection between them (11:4).

THE PRAISE OF WISDOM

2:1-7. If we seek wisdom, we will receive it from the mouth of God.

3:1-4. The blessings of wisdom are given.

4:1-2, 7-9. The blessings of listening to our fathers.

5:15-19. Wisdom teaches faithfulness in marriage.

6:6-11. Wisdom teaches us to learn lessons from Nature.

8:10-11. Wisdom is more valuable than choice riches.

8:22-23. Stresses the Everlasting Nature of Wisdom.

9:1-6. Wisdom has prepared a great banquet table and invited us to partake.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The willingness to be taught wisdom is emphasized (9:8-12). James 1:5-8 encourages us not only to want wisdom, but to pray for it. We must ask in faith, nothing doubting, and this faith cannot be a “dead” faith, but an “obedient” faith (James 2:24). It is doing what God tells us to do to secure wisdom. The Wise man is crying out....are we hearing the cry of wisdom? Are we turning to God for that wisdom?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

1. God offers to give man wisdom but not without effort on our part.
2. Wisdom and Understanding begins in the home.
3. Wisdom teaches us to learn from Nature.
4. There is only one kind of Proverb.
5. A Proverb does not make use of a Parable.
6. There seems to be different writers of the Proverbs.
7. There is a constant contrast between the wise and the simple.
8. The book of Proverbs is only divided into four sections.
9. Solomon is considered as being the author of the Proverbs.
10. Wisdom in Proverbs includes God’s wisdom.

Lesson Eleven

“Learning from the Wisdom of the Past” **(Proverbs 16-31)**

Proverbs emphasizes man’s need for wisdom and exalts and praises it as the chief end for man. She is pictured as being worth any price to be paid to secure her. Wisdom can not only help us to discover the meaning of life, but it can give practical instructions on how to live a good, successful, and happy life. While the first part of the book exalts wisdom, the latter part gives instructions on how to live and conduct ourselves correctly.

THE VALUE OF THE PROVERBS

1. It offers the wisdom of God to all who will seek it (2:1-6; 3:5; 23:23; 28:26). Man should not trust in his own wisdom, but in the wisdom of God. He needs to seek this wisdom, but as well, he is called upon to “buy it!”And the price is not cheap!

2. We can profit from the wisdom of the past that has been confirmed to us (16:25; 22:17; 24:6; 26:12). An evidence of man’s supreme foolishness is his disregard for those things in the past that have proven to be good and right. Such people never learn from the mistakes of others, so they have to make their own “stupid” mistakes over and over again. Such are “wise in their own eyes.”

3. Proverbs deals with human problems. All problems ultimately resolve down to be human problems. Hundreds of years make no difference....people are still the same. We still have the same basic problems that men had when Proverbs was written:

- a) Violence between groups, classes, or societies.
- b) Racial and Religious animosities.
- c) Pride, Selfishness, Hatred, Jealousies, Strifes, etc.
- d) Use of human beings as pawns.
- e) Great gulfs between the haves and have nots.

Wise men try to come to grips with these problems. They seek for the wisdom of God that can give insights to how to cope with such. Proverbs has the stamp of God’s approval...so, we can’t go wrong in using its wisdom.

4. Specific problem traits are dealt with in Proverbs. Pride is obviously one of man’s chief problems that causes so much heartache (16:5, 18; 21:4; 29:1). The wise man’s solution is that man needs to humble himself—recognize his true standing before God and man (29:23; 16:19; 22:4). Some of the specific problem traits of men treated in the Proverbs:

- a) Just weights and balances—fairness in business dealings (16:11; 20:10).
- b) Anger (16:32; 29:20).
- c) Talebearing (18:8, 21; 20:19; 21:23; 26:20).
- d) The need for integrity (19:1).
- e) False witness and lying (19:5).
- f) How to get rid of contention (22:10).
- g) The grave dangers of drunkenness (20:1; 23:20-21; 23:29-35).

- h) How to treat the poor (17:5; 21:13; 22:9, 16).
- i) The value of well-chosen words (16:24, 27-28; 26:4-5).
- j) How to use money well (21:17; 22:29).
- k) How to treat one's enemy (25:21-22)
- l) etc.

5. The whole thrust of Proverbs is that man has the privilege of choice. But...he needs to be taught so that he can make wise choices; so that his choices can help him to avoid the painful mistakes of the past. His choices can help him to live well and worthily. He can even chose to live for something beyond himself.

STRONG EMPHASIS ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

While it is obvious that Proverbs centers a great deal on seeking after wisdom so that she can be a great blessing in one's life, if followed; there is also another strong emphasis—family relationships! This wisdom begins in the home with parents both instructing their children on how to make good choices and live righteously (1:8; 3:11-12; 4:1-4). Also, a great deal of instruction is given on how a husband or father is to conduct himself, as well as, how the wife or mother is to conduct herself. One of the best known passages in the Bible is the one about the worthy woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Quite a few times, Proverbs deals with the undesirable traits of a wife. It also deals with the “sinful woman.”

A great number of passages deal with the discipline and instruction of children, as well as the example of parents in helping to guide children (20:7). Children must be train in the way to live life correctly (22:6). This training will at times require strict chastening (19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 13:24). The value of chastening is given (19:17), as well as, what the failure of chastening can bring (29:15). A strong passage states that a failure to chasten shows a lack of love (13:24). But it is also obvious that the child has responsibilities as well (13:1; 17:25; 19:13; 20:20; 23:24-25; 28:7, 24; 30:17).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man is not capable of directing his own steps without guidance from God. He needs the wisdom that comes from God, and it is his responsibility to seek it! He also must be willing to pay the price to secure this wisdom. A vital question needs to be answered--are we seeking God's wisdom and allowing it to guide our lives daily?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

- ___ 1. Parents show their love by chastening their children, when needed.
- ___ 2. “People problems” could be a good title for the book of Proverbs.
- ___ 3. Undesirable traits of women are dealt with in the Proverbs.
- ___ 4. Special instructions on how to be a good father and husband are provided for men.

- ___ **5. Wisdom should be passed on from father to son.**
- ___ **6. The dangers of mistreat of the poor is covered in Proverbs.**
- ___ **7. Fair business dealings are not mentioned in Proverbs.**
- ___ **8. How one speaks is not dealt with in Proverbs.**
- ___ **9. Use of money is dealt with in Proverbs.**
- ___ **10. Pride is not mentioned once in Proverbs.**
- ___ **11. Wisdom is emphasized as a chief end for man.**
- ___ **12. One of the great values of Proverbs is that it deals with practical problems.**
- ___ **13. People problems have always been basically the same through the ages.**

Lesson Twelve

“Vanity of Life Without God”
(Ecclesiastes 1-12)

The book of Ecclesiastes is a very practical philosophic approach to life and its meaning. It deals with those important issues such as: (1) Why are we here? (2) Why do we do what we do? (3) What’s the point of all of this endless doing of things over and over? The book is designed to cause the reader to think, evaluate, and to look for the meaning and purpose of existence and toil. But the writer is also speaking as one who has been there! He has tried desperately to find out the answers. He gives an over-view of his experiences and reactions. And then he gives his conclusions about the whole matter. We will look at the book in five scenes!

I—CAN MEANING BE FOUND IN ACQUIRING WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE?

The curtain goes up on Scene One. Solomon comes on the stage. He is a marvelous looking man. His frame and face bears the stamp of wisdom and knowledge. God gave him wisdom above any other. Kings, Queens, Princes come and sit at his feet and marvel at his great wisdom and knowledge. They exclaim....we were never told the half of how great your wisdom is! Then, Solomon is asked....*“Are you happy? Have you found the real meaning of life?”* He thinks deeply and answers (1:16-18; 2:14-16). He points out that acquiring of wisdom and knowledge brings grief and sorrow. And, even with all that wisdom and knowledge, you cannot change the way things are. Unfortunately, the same fate overtakes both the wise and the fool. And the curtain goes down on Scene One.

II—IS THE PURPOSE OF MAN TO ATTAIN MUCH POSSESSIONS AND WEALTH?

Solomon comes on the stage again decked with all the wealth that a man could wear. Treasures are all around him—gold, silver, jewels, etc. The world has been bringing its treasures to him. He has amassed a fortune. Again, Solomon is asked....*“Are you happy? Is this the meaning and purpose of man’s existence? Is this what man should strive for in this life?”* After thinking deeply he answers (2:11, 18-21; 5:10-13, 15-17; 6:1-2). He points out that the acquiring of wealth also brings its grief and sorrow. Often-times, the one who gets them cannot enjoy them. He dies and passes them on to possibly a fool. One writer pointed out: *“There are men who will live as paupers for 40 years in order to die rich.”* T. B. Larimore told of a man he met on a train. He had spent 22 years in Mexico amassing a large sum of money. While he was gone, his father, mother and sister had all died. When he returned home there was no one to greet him, embrace him, or take on over his success. There was no one close to enjoy his prosperity with. When asked, *“Was it worth it,”* he answered, *“NO!”* The curtain comes down on Scene Two.

III—IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE TO INDULGE IN PLEASURABLE THINGS?

As the curtain goes up on Scene Three, Solomon appears on the stage and acts out all the pleasures that this life has to offer (2:3, 10). He again is asked, *“Are you happy? Have you found*

the real purpose for our existence upon the earth? Is this the reason why we are here?" His answer is again given (2:1-2, 11). Humans are continually seeking new thrills and new pleasures to indulge in—always seeking for more and more. But do these things satisfy? What do the many wrecked lives tell us about finding happiness and meaning in these things? The curtain falls on Scene Three.

IV—IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE TO GAIN AND EXERCISE POWER OVER OTHERS?

This time Solomon comes on stage in all his splendor and glory as a king showing his power over millions. He had countries paying tribute to him. All enemies around them had been subdued. Israel was in her glory under Solomon. Again, Solomon is asked, *"Is this the answer? Is this the real meaning of life? Is this for which man should strive?"* His answer is give (8:8-10; 4:1-3). Power-hungry people will often do anything that it takes to possess power. They will sacrifice their best friend, their mate and family, and even their own soul to possess it. Lands are drenched in the blood because men have struggled for power. Happy homes are turned into places of sorrow because of such. But is the acquiring of power really worth the price that has to be paid? Power is a hard task-master...but once it is attained; the secret is to hold it. The wise man says that none of these things are the answer. The curtain closes on Scene Four.

V—THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

As the curtains goes up this last time, there is a mixed scene before us. At first, we see the beauties of nature: the dewdrops on the beautiful flowers, the stately trees, and the majestic hills. Then, suddenly the elements burst into flames. People are crying out for the rocks to fall upon them and they try to hide from Him that was coming. Then, we see everyone brought before the Lord of Heaven and Earth for Judgment. The scene disappears and Solomon comes on the stage again. He lets us know that he appreciates our patience in listening and the opportunity he has had to inform us about these things. He then offers his conclusion to all of this:

- 1) **Be satisfied with what God gives you** (3:11-14; 5:18-19).
- 2) **Serve the Lord from your youth** (12:1).
- 3) **Fear and Reverence God...keep His commandments!** (12:13-14).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." (Proverbs 12:15). *"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him."* (Proverbs 26:12). Enough said!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or False

- ___ 1. "All is vanity" means that such is not the real purpose for our existence.
- ___ 2. One of the great challenges of securing power is to retain it.
- ___ 3. Thrills and pleasures of life only temporarily satisfy man.
- ___ 4. Solomon's great wisdom brought him all that life had to offer.

- ___ **5. The same fate overtakes the wise as well as the fool.**
- ___ **6. Contentment is a part of Solomon's answer to the purpose of life.**
- ___ **7. Solomon is saying that securing riches is wrong.**
- ___ **8. Solomon is saying that having power over people is wrong.**
- ___ **9. Solomon is saying that acquiring wisdom and knowledge is wrong.**
- ___ **10. Solomon's advice for happiness is to live in peace with your fellow-man.**

Lesson Thirteen

“The Beauty and Purity of Marital Love”
(Song of Solomon 1-8)

We will be looking at what could be called the “*incomparable and matchless Song of Solomon*.” The purpose of the book is to set forth the theme of true marital love and the rightness of such. Marital love between a man and woman can be pure, beautiful, and approved of God when expressed within the framework of marriage (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible is full of warnings and admonitions in regards to: fornication, adultery, lust, evil concupiscence, and lasciviousness (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The Bible exhorts a man to love, honor and cherish his wife as he does himself (Ephesians 5:25-28). The woman is exhorted to love, respect and submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22, 33). Neither is to deny the marital rights of the other (1 Corinthians 7:5).

There are many perverted views about marital love. Some advocate that it is only to be expressed to bring children into the world. That anything else is tainted with sinfulness, but it is a necessary evil to bear children. Celibacy is overly glorified as a life of purity. Solomon’s Song helps to deal with the many false notions and shows the rightness and blessedness of such in marriage.

The book can be divided into three sections: (1) The mutual delight of the lover and the beloved (1:1-3:5); (2) This love is to be celebrated as nuptial love between the Bridegroom and the Bride (3:6-5:1); and (3) Love is tried, in danger of being lost, and then recovered (5:2-8:14).

THE RAPTURE OF FIRST LOVE (1:1-3:5)

Shulamith, the beloved, is waiting for the arrival of her lover (1:1-8). She pours out her rapture and longing for her lover. Her admiring companion ladies respond to her question as to where to find her lover. Her lover appears (1:9-2:7) and they express their mutual delight towards each other. This ends with a refrain of serene contentment expressed by the beloved to her companions (2:7). The beloved woman sings about her lover (2:8-3:5). She tells how the loved one wooed her. She tells how that first love is like the delights of Spring and Summer in the open fields. She tells how her heart longs for him until he comes. Once she has him, she will not let him go. Her thoughts end with the idea of deep satisfaction.

NUPTIAL REJOICING (3:6-5:1)

The wedding feast is ready and the Bridegroom comes. He is surrounded by his elite bodyguards. His chariot is worthy of the occasion. He is wearing the crown given him by his mother for this special day. The daughters of Jerusalem go forth to meet him. The Bridegroom then expresses his delight in his Bride. The Bride expresses her responses and surrenders herself to her husband. The Bridegroom’s response is one of delight and satisfaction. And he also encourages other to partake of the same kind of experience with their Bride.

SEPARATION AND REUNION (5:2-8:14)

In a dream, the Bride describes their temporary separation as being very undesirable (5:2-8). She expresses her misery and longing and searching for the Beloved. She even appeals to her companions to help her. Her companions sympathize with her and try to console her (5:9-6:3). Finally, the Bridegroom returns and rejoices in his beloved again (6:4-9). The companions of the Bride sing praises of her beauty (6:8-10). The Bride responds with a declaration of her great delight (6:11-12). The companions of the Bride pour out their praise as they behold her happiness (6:13-7:5). The Bridegroom delights in his Bride's attraction (7:6-9). The Bride, with joy, invites her husband to return with her to scenes of her youth (7:10-8:4). Then, his love would beautify all that was familiar to her. In anticipation of such bliss, she calls upon her companions to acknowledge her perfect peace. Then, the Bride and Bridegroom are pictured together in a restful joy in the country-side (8:5-7). The Bride's joy overflows to her kindred (8:8-12). The Bridegroom bids his Bride to sing (8:13). And the book ends with a melody of the Bride's voice inviting the Bridegroom to hasten to her side (8:14).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God made us male and female. He designed us to be attracted to each other. But He has also made it clear that expressions of sexual love are only acceptable in the Marriage relationship. Outside of Marriage, it is a sin and wrong. Marital love between a man and woman is like unto beautiful flowers or flowering trees. It is better than wine. Its desirability is great. These feelings should and can be expressed to one another in the marital relationship. In a spiritual application, Christ's love for the church is like unto one's love for their mate. Our love for Him should be strong as well.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

True or false

1. Having children is the primary reason for marital love.
2. The church is pictured as the desirable Bride of Christ.
3. Sexual or physical attraction should not be the only reason for marriage.
4. The physical enjoyment of marital love is limited in its ability to hold people together.
5. Anticipation is part of the pleasure of marital love.
6. Sexual immorality is dirty and degrading.
7. Marital love between a husband and wife is right and beautiful.
8. There are legitimate things that help to enhance marital love that are acceptable.
9. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder!"
10. Marital love should last a life-time.

