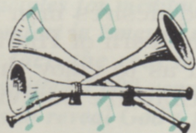
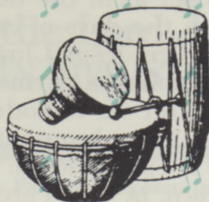


U N D E R S T A N D I N G

The Psalms



A GRAND PROPHECY OF THE WORK OF
JESUS CHRIST IN FIVE STAGES

The poetry and purpose of divine redemption

THE Psalms are a compilation of different writings by faithful men in the past, expressing their feelings and emotions in the changing circumstances of life. But not only do the Psalms speak of the poetry of emotion, they also breathe forth prophecies concerning God's offer of salvation, and the purpose of the two advents of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible records the Psalms in a special order — arranged in five sections to set forth the development of God's purpose from the days of creation to the time, still future, when Jesus Christ will return from heaven to establish a divine kingdom on earth. In this booklet we introduce a special feature of the Psalms, demonstrating their relationship to the books of Moses: the five books called *The Pentateuch*, in which are recorded the basis of the divine purpose. By this it will be seen that Almighty God desires men and women to read the Psalms to learn of His intentions with the earth, as well as to enjoy the comfort and encouragement that are so evident in their expressions.

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

A Christadelphian Publication

**DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF
THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD;
AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS
CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.**

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Understanding

The Psalms

A Grand Prophecy of the
Work of the Lord Jesus Christ
IN FIVE STAGES

THE BOOK OF PSALMS, located in the centre of the Bible, is a collection of 150 musical poems, recording important principles for meditation and reflection. They are often read for comfort in times of distress, uncertainty and confusion. But, in fact, the real message of this famous collection of songs, written 1,000 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to reveal God's purpose in His Son and the way in which eternal salvation can be obtained.

This booklet sets out to explain the great significance and beauty of the Psalms, portraying what the Lord Jesus accomplished at his first advent, and what is proposed for his imminent second coming.

Jesus pointed to the importance of the Psalms, telling certain disciples after his resurrection: "*These are the words that I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and IN THE PSALMS, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*" (Luke 24:36-45).

This is a most unusual statement. The Lord Jesus indicated that we can expect to read *in the Psalms* about his mission, and the saving work he performed. Thus, the Psalms are more than just meditative reflections. They contain vital prophetic declarations concerning salvation.

The Remarkable Construction of The Psalms A Reflection of the Five Books of Moses

The Hebrew Bible divides the Psalms into five books. These are — **Book 1:** Psalms 1-41; **Book 2:** Psalms 42-72; **Book 3:** Psalms 73-89; **Book 4:** Psalms 90-106; **Book 5:** Psalms 107-145. The final section (Psalms 146-150) comprise a summary of the whole collection of Psalms.

In a remarkable way, these FIVE BOOKS OF THE PSALMS exemplify the FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES, which appear as the first five books of our Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

However, in the Hebrew Scriptures those titles, with which we are familiar, do not appear. Instead, Genesis is called: "***In the Beginning***"; Exodus is termed: "***These are the Names***"; whilst Leviticus becomes: "***And He Called***"; Numbers: "***In the Wilderness***"; and Deuteronomy: "***These are the Words.***" The significance of these original Hebrew titles is seen in the five books of the Psalms. As the books of Moses record, the deliverance of the nation of Israel from the oppression they suffered in the land of Egypt under the Pharaohs, and their experiences in the wilderness as they marched towards the Promised Land — so the five books of the Psalms reveal the way that can lead a person from the "land of mortality and death" to salvation in the coming kingdom that God will establish upon the earth.

Further, the five books of Moses (sometimes called *The Pentateuch*) record the origins of mankind. They describe how, in the beginning, humanity fell from their privileged position in the Paradise of God, and suffered mortality as a result. So, from Adam onwards, the majority of people failed to respond to the divine instructions. Yet, a way of divine mercy was revealed by which that failure could be reversed, and life eternal obtained through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, foreshadowed by parable and prophecy from the very beginning.

The Psalms ascribe praise to the Creator because of His righteousness and mercy. They not only speak of how salvation is obtained, but present a glorious picture of the universal kingdom of God that will shortly be established at Jerusalem, with the Lord Jesus Christ as king. When that time arrives, all nations will be directed and instructed in ways of righteousness.

Prophecies Concerning "Jesus of Nazareth," as "Lord and Christ"

The Psalms present the coming of Messiah in prophetic pictures, many centuries before his actual birth in Bethlehem. They foretold the wonder of his miraculous begetting as the Saviour who had to be uniquely strengthened by His Father; they show the sorrows associated with the mortal nature that he bore in common with ourselves. They picture him as both "Jesus of Nazareth," a man associated with suffering; and as "Lord and Christ," the future king of the world.

The name *Jesus* means "God will Save," and speaks of his mission as redeemer of a people suffering from sin and death. It was as the "saviour" that Jesus was later crucified by a nation that misunderstood his purpose. Thus his name indicated his association with mortality through his birth of the virgin Mary.

But the title *Lord* applies to his exalted destiny as "Son of God." God determined to provide a Son who should reflect His moral excellence, and be able to overcome the disabilities that mortality had brought upon humanity, and thus lead others to salvation.

The Psalms progressively reveal those two aspects of the life and purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is known to many only as "the babe of Bethlehem." They present his ministry and sufferings as he identified with men and women imprisoned by sin, disease and weakness. They expose his innermost emotions and thoughts as he faced the tragedy of crucifixion.

But they also prophesy of his victory and glory as he arose from the grave triumphant over sin and death. They speak of his impending return to earth; his assumption of divine power as he puts down all rule, authority and power; his ultimate domination of the world at his feet; and his elevation as "King of kings and Lord of lords" in the millennial Age to come.

The Five Divisions of the Psalms

The five sections of the *Psalms*, reveal important stages of personal redemption. In fact, in Bible numerics the number *Five* indicates the principles of "grace" (or favor), as might be demonstrated by an open hand with its five fingers extended to help. This "grace" is seen in the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus for those he will save.

The First Book of the Psalms — Psalms 1-41

This section of the Psalms corresponds to the theme of

Genesis the first book of Moses, and draws heavily upon the record of Creation.

The opening chapters of the Bible reveal that God created heaven and earth. They speak of the joy and blessedness of the paradise formed in Eden; the failure of man to uphold the divine commandments; the condemnation that came upon those who transgress His laws. Yet there is a promise of forgiveness through the sacrifice of a lamb; the covenant of promise established through the actions of such as faithful Abraham, and the blessings that come upon all nations as a result.

All this is contained in the book of Genesis, and is reflected in the **FIRST BOOK OF PSALMS**.

As the book of Genesis introduces Adam, the first man created, so the first section of the Psalms highlights a remarkable man. He is, however, different from Adam, who brought sin and death through his disobedience. Instead this man is unique, bringing righteousness and life through his obedience.

Psalm 1 presents a "*righteous man*" (v. 6) who is seen to be "*blessed*," a word which means to be "very happy." It speaks of the happiness of a man who walks a perfect course through life, avoiding the association of sinners and ungodly people. Only one man has been able to experience this happiness in a complete sense: the **Lord Jesus Christ**, the sinless son of God. He is the man brought to attention in this opening Psalm. Through righteousness, he restores that which Adam lost in the beginning: favor and harmony with God.

But the sinless and obedient life revealed by Jesus of Nazareth in his ministry to the people over 19 centuries ago, was rejected by a generation that preferred the evil and godless ways common to humanity. Instead of seeking the salvation offered by the Lord Jesus, they took him and crucified him.

The Psalms capture the drama of these experiences in intense prophetic pictures.

Psalm 22 shows that before the Lord would prevail over his enemies, he was brought into "the dust of the earth" (v. 15), when his tormentors, putting him on a cross of shame, "*pierced his hands and feet*" (v. 16). Afterwards he was placed in a tomb "*cut out in the rock*" (Matthew 27:60). But the Roman soldiers and Jewish religious leaders were unable to prevent his resurrection. God brought His Son from the grave, as Psalm 18 describes: "*He brought me forth also into a large place. He*

delivered me because He delighted in me. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me" (vv. 19-20).

Jesus endured the pain and the shame of the cross because of "the joy that was set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). Psalm 22 illustrates that joy.

It depicts two stages in the Lord's work for salvation.

The first picture is of a company of people who would be redeemed by his shed blood: "*I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee*" (v. 22). The Lord looked beyond the suffering, seeing himself ultimately as surrounded, not by Gentile "dogs" (v. 16) which describes most of those at the foot of the cross, but by a company of faithful men and women, the outcome of his work of salvation he accomplished at his first advent.

The second picture portrays his impending return to earth, when he will establish a divine political kingdom and reign from Jerusalem in glory. So Psalm 22:25 declares: "*My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation.*" This will be centred in a glorious temple to be built on the hill of Zion, called "the House of Prayer for all Nations" (Isaiah 56:7) and described in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. Then "*all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee*" (Psalm 22:27). This is certainly not the case today. Instead, the world is filled with hatred and envy, with the violence of anger, and the ungodliness of a society without a conscience. But a dramatic change will occur when the Lord Jesus returns. Of that time the Bible declares: "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2Thessalonians 1:7-10).

As the Lord was redeemed from the sin-nature he bore in common with all mankind, and glorified with immortality after his resurrection, so can those who accept his teaching and identify with his sacrifice and resurrection. To do so, they must first recognize their fallen condition, as members of a race of sinners. We are born with an inclination to evil, and

consequently easily stray from the way of right. Left to ourselves we would be destitute of all hope. So Paul says that "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1Corinthians 15:17-18). Without Christ, we have no hope.

The Psalmist reflects this important teaching, by pointing to the happiness that comes from a proper recognition of our condition, and by seeking the way of redemption. Psalm 32 opens with the words: "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" The person who enjoys full fellowship with God is certainly in a "most happy" (as the word "*blessed*" really means) condition.

Notice that, in this verse there are two different classes mentioned. The first is that of a person forgiven; the latter of a man who has not sinned! The first describes the common lot of mankind, all of whom have fallen into sin and transgression; the latter applies only to one man: the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was "no guile" (1Peter 2:22), being "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). In the Psalm both Jesus Christ and the people he came to save, are joined together in "happiness."

A Picture of the First Step to Salvation. The first book of the Psalms presents the first stage of redemption. An individual must be prepared to acknowledge sin, and accept the terms of salvation — the crucifixion of one's own desires in order to serve Almighty God. This comes from the reading and understanding of His creative Word of Life: the Bible.

The Second Book of the Psalms — Psalms 42-72

This book corresponds to Moses' book of **Exodus**, which means "*These are the Names.*" In Exodus, Moses reveals the *Name* of Israel's God: the Hebrew *Yahweh*, which means: *He Who Will Be Revealed in Those He Selects*. When God brought His people from Egypt under the hand of Moses, He redeemed them from the oppression and persecution they experienced, and desired them to manifest His characteristics.

The challenge of the book of Exodus is between two ways of life: that of God versus that of the Egypt. From the very beginning the challenge is presented: Will the God of Israel (*Yahweh*) or the God of Egypt (*Pharaoh*) prevail?

When Moses asked Pharaoh to acknowledge the supremacy

of the God of the Hebrews, he retorted: "Who is the Lord (*Yahweh*) that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not *Yahweh*, neither shall I let Israel go!" Believing in the superstitions of the gods of Egypt, he was ignorant of the divine will. So his power was ultimately destroyed in the waters of the Red Sea when the armies of Egypt endeavored to destroy the people of God.

The same question presents itself today to people concerned with the pressures of life: Will the worship of materialism and human prowess, or that of divine revelation and wisdom prevail? Each individual must make that decision for himself!

The second book of the Psalms outlines the great changes to come about when God's people are ultimately delivered from the power of sin and oppression. Psalm 72 commences: "*Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment*" (vv. 1-2). This speaks of the divine theocracy of the future, when the kingdom of God will be established by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, all the idols of Egypt, represented today in the teachings and ambitions of mankind, will be destroyed, and God's way elevated.

The Second Step to Salvation. This is seen in the principle of baptism taught in the Scriptures. As the Israelites were saved from the power of the Egyptians through the crossing of the Red Sea (described in the second book of the Bible), so believers are introduced to the way of righteousness through baptism. Baptism is a full immersion in water, by which the former way of life is figuratively destroyed, and the believer walks "in newness of life" (see Paul's explanation in Romans 6, and write for a copy of the booklet, *Baptism: Essential for Salvation*).

The Third Book of the Psalms — Psalms 73-89

This third book emphasizes the next step along the way of righteousness: a reflection of the holiness of God in the life of the believer.

The Hebrew title of Moses' third book, Leviticus, is "***And He called,***" emphasizing that God calls His people to dedication. The book of Leviticus outlines the sacrifices and offerings required of the nation. Israel was told that they could only approach God upon the basis of consistent sacrifices which had to be presented by an appointed priesthood.

This points to the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth, whose

offering of his life to God was acceptable because he was sinless, and perfectly obedient to his Father's will. Now the Lord Jesus Christ has been elevated to the position of "high priest" to plead on behalf of those who desire to have fellowship with God.

These principles are contained in this third book of the Psalms. Psalm 89 introduces us to two "*holy ones*." One of these is God Himself (v. 18); the other is His Son, Jesus Christ termed "*Thy (God's) holy one*" (v. 19).

Of his Son, God declared in v. 19: "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty.*" Acts 13:22 identifies Jesus Christ as the one described. Jesus Christ was the "mighty one" who came by the power of God in the virgin-birth reported in the opening chapters of the Gospel records, and described as the "Son of God." There is an important reason why Jesus had to be uniquely begotten: he had a remarkable and mighty work to perform, that required one specially strengthened to overcome.

From his mother, Mary, Jesus inherited the flesh and blood nature that we all share, with its sinful propensities and characteristics that incline towards evil. From his Father, Almighty God, he inherited a disposition towards righteousness. Because of this twofold aspect inherited through his unique birth, Jesus experienced a tremendous conflict. His nature, like ours, sought for personal gratification; his mind, like his Father's, presented an opposition to sin (Hebrews 5:7). Within this contest of flesh versus Spirit, he displayed an attitude which his Father described as "*mighty*" (Psalm 89:19). Therefore, of necessity, the Lord Jesus was strengthened beyond what is required of us, because he faced the enormous task of achieving a perfectly obedient life, in order to be the Saviour of mankind — and no other man has ever been called upon to perform such a tremendous, and difficult, task.

The Third Step to Salvation. After learning the principles of godliness (Book 1), and responding in the obedience of baptism (Book 2), the believer now must follow holiness in life, separating from a godless society, and seeking to please the Father in actions of faithfulness.

The Fourth Book of the Psalms — Psalms 90-106

The fourth section of the Psalms represents that of the book of Numbers which is appropriately named "*In the Wilderness.*" It presents the experiences of Moses and those with him in the

wilderness, when he brought Israel out of Egypt and led them towards the Promised Land. The opening Psalm describes itself as "*a prayer of Moses the man of God*" (Psalm 90).

It contrasts the eternity of God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, with the brevity of man's life. In verse 10 of that Psalm Moses describes mortal existence as "*threescore years and ten.*" He saw himself surrounded by mortality and death. As he struggled to bring the people to the land of freedom, he experienced continuing incidents of failure, weakness and death, as the people fell prey to the harsh conditions of the wilderness through lack of faith.

Nevertheless, he knew that God is merciful and had initiated salvation for His people (v. 14). In the midst of the evidence of death, Moses prayed for everlasting life (v. 17). He knew that "*the work of our hands*" seen in the tabernacle the people built in the wilderness under the instruction of God, was in fact, a grand prophecy of the coming redemption through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moses knew that sin — when it is forgiven — is no bar to the kingdom of God. So he prays for "*mercy*" (v. 14), in order that the people "*may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" Forgiveness of sins is possible upon an acknowledgement of what God requires of His people, when a full and open confession is made, and a resolution to avoid the pathway of evil and folly in the future. So the apostle John teaches that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1:9).

This is the meaning of true baptism as taught in the Bible. After a confession of belief, a full immersion under water is required, as shown in the example of Jesus himself (see Mark 1:10). The ritual expresses the commitment of the person submitting to this important act that they will follow its principles in life. Baptism identifies with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, by which he challenged sin in all its aspects, and overcame its power (Romans 6:3-4). Symbolically, in baptism a person is "covered" by his atoning work, and rises from the water to demonstrate a "resurrection" to a new life of dedication to God. In this status, the believer has access to "*fervent prayer*" (James 5:16), by which forgiveness of sins is obtained, and fellowship with God is upheld.

That is why Psalm 106 is a prayer for deliverance: "*Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto*

Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation" (v. 4). These words teach that the people of God are those to whom He shows favor. That favor is in an understanding of His Word of Truth, the provision of His Son for their personal salvation, and the opportunity for forgiveness of sins.

But soon there is to be a greater moment when God's people will be "visited with salvation." When the Lord Jesus returns again from heaven (see Acts 1:11), God's favor will be shown in a literal and practical manner. The nation of Israel will be restored, and its journey through the "wilderness" of exile amongst the nations will end. We see a token of that in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This conforms exactly to the prophecy of Jesus given to his disciples, when he said of the Jewish people who rejected him in AD30, that "they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). That the people and city are no longer so persecuted as in former times, indicates that the day of their full redemption is at hand. So Psalm 106 continues: "*That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance*" (v. 5). This must be the attitude of people who desire to please Almighty God.

But notice a further important point in that Psalm. As it continues to review Israel's failure to understand the reason for its wandering through the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, the Psalm highlights the tragic mistake of the people: "*But they were mingled among the nations, and learned their works*" (v. 35). This is a salutary warning! Israel grieved God because they idolised the works and religions of the nations around them; the people gave themselves over to enjoying the way of life of a society that was abhorrent to God.

People of faith will stand apart from such a way. The apostle John urges: "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1John 2:15). The "world" spoken of here defines the religious and humanistic teachings and ungodly ways of a society which opposes His Truth. As disciples of Christ, we must abstain from involvement in the doctrines and principles of a society that is soon to be removed in the impending divine judgments.

The Fourth Step to Salvation. Thus, the fourth step in the walk of salvation is to reveal the confidence of Hope: knowing that God will lead those who are faithful to triumph over difficulties, and to develop faith and trust.

The Fifth Book of the Psalms — Psalms 107-145

The last book of the **Psalms** reflects the principles of the final book of Moses. Entitled "*These are the Words,*" the book of Deuteronomy represents that One would come as the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14), being the moral manifestation of God in human nature (1Timothy 3:16). This was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy describes the overall purpose of God leading His people through a place of trial, in order to bring them to His chosen place of redemption. It speaks of the way in which God brought restoration to the weary nation that struggled through the wilderness.

So it depicts the end in view: the nation established safely in the Promised Land. In fact, twenty-two times reference is made to "*the place which the Lord hath chosen,*" emphasizing the locality where Israel would find peace and happiness.

God selected the land of Canaan (today known as Israel) and the city of Jerusalem as the place of their restoration. Later, the prophet Jeremiah spoke in clear, unmistakable words about the place God will yet elevate above all cities throughout the earth when His Son returns: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord. to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (ch. 3:17).

Psalms 107:7 records the march of the Jewish people through the wilderness, in order that they might enter into their appointed place of safety: "*He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*" Ultimately, in the days of king David, their capital was established in Jerusalem — but the people again neglected their spiritual responsibilities and were banished amongst the nations, whose ways they desired so much .

But the record of their failure does not imply that God has forgotten His purpose.

Not at all. The Psalm says that God "*sent His word and healed them*" (v. 20). This was done in a way unexpected by the people of Israel. The Scriptures declare that "God sent forth His

Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that are under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of the Word of God. In fact, the apostle John declares that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). This shows that the Word of God was revealed in His Son, and we are invited to experience the healing power of his teachings. It was this man, Jesus, the Son of God, who stilled the stormy waters of the Lake of Galilee on one occasion (see Psalm 107:29) — demonstrating his ability to calm the troubles and pressures of life which seem to engulf his people.

But the greatest healing process will commence when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth from heaven. With divine power, he will bring about remarkable changes in society. He will remove governments that encourage violence; refuse the policies that only elevate flesh; instruct all peoples in the principles that will bring harmony and goodwill to the world.

Psalm 145 speaks of this coming time of grandeur and joy. This psalm could well be called the *National Anthem* of the coming Kingdom of God on earth, for it expresses words that will be on everyone's heart and lips in the day when that kingdom is established on earth.

The first verse extols the presence of the Lord "for ever and ever," and then sweeps on to the dramatic changes that will come upon the whole earth, as all peoples honor the king who will then reign in Jerusalem.

"I will speak... of the glorious honor of Thy majesty... of Thy wondrous works... Thy terrible acts... Thy greatness... abundantly utter... shall sing" (read carefully all of verses 5-7).

In those days a proper system of education will exist, as people learn to read their Bibles and listen to the teachings of the One who not only created in the beginning, but who will then re-create His glory upon the earth: "they shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power."

This amazing scene, so unlike the present, is described by the prophet Isaiah: "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the

house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (ch. 2:2-3).

A new system of justice will be introduced. Instead of jurisdiction being based upon fabricated evidence and the clever presentations of expensive experts in law, the injured and distressed will be properly assisted. The great king and his immortal associates in that day will be able to examine the hearts and minds of their subjects, so that proper justice will be meted out: "*The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down*" (Psalm 145:14).

The vital needs of mankind will be addressed. No longer will famine and pestilence stalk the earth through the maladministration of men, but every care will be given: "*the eyes of all look unto Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing*" (vv. 15-16).

War and violence will be abolished in that day: "*The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will He destroy*" (v. 20). No longer will greed and ambition be elevated as the aim of life, but the divine principles of mercy and lovingkindness will replace the present evil heart so evident in the affairs of the nations.

No wonder the Psalm concludes with a personal expression of joy and satisfaction: "*My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever*" (v. 21). But if all mankind is to do this in the future, when the kingdom of God is established on the earth, should not individuals who desire to please God do so today?

In fact, the Bible invites men and women to respond faithfully to His appeal, and to endeavor to reveal these qualities in life now. The apostle Peter teaches that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). This is the very purpose of the gospel message. God's kingdom will be established at "the set time" (Psalm 102:13) determined by Him. Paul adds that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

But before that day arrives, God urges men and women to

separate from the ways of society about them, and devote themselves to developing His characteristics. To such He speaks as a Father: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2Corinthians 6:17-18).

The Bible describes our present experiences as a wilderness probation, which provides the opportunity to reveal our worthiness in the eyes of Almighty God. He invites us to follow His teachings now, that we might enjoy full fellowship with Him in the day of His salvation, and when He has established the throne of His glory in Jerusalem. The way this is done is clearly revealed in the Scriptures (see Acts 2:38), and involves believing, obeying, being baptised into the sin-covering name of Jesus Christ, and associating with those of a kindred mind and a similar desire, so that together we are encouraged to continue faithfully until the appearing of our Lord from heaven.

The Fifth Step to Salvation. This is to have a clear understanding of what God proposes for this world. To believe that Christ is coming and will reign on earth, and to seek harmony in truth with the Bible today, by believing and obeying its vital message.

The Final Picture of Peace, Harmony and Unity

The concluding five psalms (Psa. 146-150) summarize the themes of the whole book. These five sections again reflect the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses.

[1] Psalm 146 presents the **Genesis** theme of creation and testifies that there will come a day when all people dwelling upon the planet earth, will respond in praise to Almighty God (v. 1). It teaches that man is a dying creature because of sin (Psa. 146:3-4), but shows that the resurrection is a fact, as God will "loose the prisoners" of sin and death from their commitment. As the book of Genesis describes a remarkable king reigning in Salem (the original name for Jerusalem; see Genesis 14:18), so Psalm 146:10 records the Son of God reigning upon a throne in the future city of Jerusalem.

[2] Psalm 147 presents the **Exodus** theme, and urges all mankind to praise God (v. 1). Exodus records the time when God gathered His people from Egypt, took them into the wilderness and provided them with food and water, giving grass

for the flocks and herds (Psalm. 147:8), and caring for Israel for forty years. In His deliverance, God destroyed the might of Egypt, their horses and chariots (Exodus 15:1; cp. Psalm. 147:18). Israel was led through the Red Sea, which "froze" (v. 17) to allow the people to pass safely across on dry ground.

[3] Psalm 148 takes up the theme of **Leviticus**, which means "*And He Called.*" The Psalm contemplates the ultimate fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, a man called to leave his environment in obedience to God. So it speaks of the time when all the world will be *called* upon to honor God, through a people "near to Him" (v. 14), as was Abraham, the man of faith.

So the Psalm concludes with a joyful picture of animate beings and inanimate matter being called upon to praise God (v. 1-10). These are the angels, heavenly bodies (sun, moon and stars), creatures of the earth, the elements, lifeless matter, living things, people great and small. They rejoice, for God will have redeemed a special nation to Himself. That nation is Israel, a people called "near unto Him," who have developed from the man of faith, Abraham.

[4] Psalm 149 presents the **Numbers** theme. The name of the book means "*In the wilderness*", and records the occasion when the false prophet Balaam was promised a lucrative fee to curse Israel. Many people and nations have tried to repeat his action, but without success. Always, the curse has been turned into a blessing by the divine Hand of Providence, as it was in the days of Balaam. So, unwittingly, he prophesied of "a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). In fact, Balaam was then given a glimpse of the future regal and military glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Psalm speaks of the praise which shall ascend from the redeemed (v. 5), who will then be given the power to assert the divine Will in all the earth (v. 6), and to topple all human power into the dust (v. 8).

[5] The final Psalm 150 emphasizes the **Deuteronomy** theme. "*These are the Words*" begins the last book of Moses. They are words which should be honored by all mankind from the beginning of life to the end. The recurring phrase is, appropriately: "*Praise Him.*"

All creation will praise God from every place, earth and heaven (v. 1); for the greatest of reasons: His mighty acts and majestic character (v. 2); with every kind of instrument, wind,

string and percussion (vv. 3-4). This praise will be reflected in the future day when God's sanctuary is established (v. 1), when a great temple is built in Jerusalem, and the city becomes the "House of prayer for all people" (Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:17). Thus, in this last of the Psalms, the completed "words" of the Son of God, as the divine Word of Life, are displayed.

The Lessons of the Psalms

We summarise the following important points noted:

1. The Psalms contain many prophecies of the first coming of the Lord, as Jesus of Nazareth, and his sinless perfection.

2. They prophesy not only of his death on the cross, but also his resurrection and ascension to heaven, that he might mediate on the right hand of his Father, on behalf of his followers.

3. They proclaim the second coming of Christ as the king of glory, reigning from Jerusalem over all nations.

4. There is a place in the kingdom for all who desire to prepare themselves in a personal conversion to righteousness.

5. To inherit this kingdom, a person must plan ahead — by believing the gospel of the kingdom, and the things concerning the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31).

6. God is about to establish His throne and kingdom on earth, when all mankind will accept His terms and conditions of life.

7. A glorious temple will be built in Jerusalem, from whence the laws of truth and righteousness will be extended to all parts of the earth.

This is the message of the Psalms — the message of the entire Scriptures — through which God invites you to respond to His Truth.

When this is done faithfully, our whole life becomes a delightful Psalm, expressing the deepest feelings of our being, and providing an encouraging example of faithfulness to others.

We invite the reader to obtain further information concerning these important matters, whilst the day of opportunity remains open.

— *B. Philp snr.*

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THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

...or, as the name implies, the Brethren of Christ (Hebrews 2:11), are a body of people associated together by a belief in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12); and by immersion into Christ (Galatians 3:27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and identification with his resurrection (Romans 6:5).

They do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are able to make a person wise unto salvation (2Timothy 3:15-17). Believing in the divine authorship of the Bible, they think it only reasonable to reject any interpretation which fails to harmonise all the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures; and, finding that the creeds of the various existing religious groups are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, they feel compelled to stand apart, making appeal in all such matters to the statements of Scripture, and testing all teachings thereby.

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