



Mapping the Psalms
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Sept 11: 1.Kickoff-Intro Pr. R
 Sept 18: 2. The BeginningPs1&2
 Sept 25: 3.PsalterTheme: GuardinAngels
 Oct 2: 4. **.God's Character.**
 Oct 9: 5.
 Oct 16: 6.

Oct 23: 7.
 Oct 30: 8 TRUST
 Nov 6: 9.
 Nov 13: 10
 Nov 20: 11. THANKSGIVING
 Nov 27: Thanksgiving Svc

Dec 4: Advent MESSIANIC
 Dec 11: WNC Christmas Party
 Dec 18: Campus Worship
 Dec 25: Christmas: No WNC
 Jan 1: NewYears No WNC

GENRE	CHAPTERS
.Praise.	115, 149, 32, 81, 47, 103, 147, 139, 145, 124, 93, 134, 150, 122, 98, 129, 117, 100, 104, 114, 96, 9, 113, 33
.Thanksgiving.	75, 65, 138, 106, 105, 116, 18,30, 66, 135, 136, 67, 108
.Trust.	11, 27, 121, 91, 63, 23, 131, 62, 125
.Wisdom.	1, 128, 146, 39, 14, 15, 53, 36, 37, 133, 49, 62, 92, 19, 107, 119, 112, 127, 111, 73, 50, 34, 25, 94, 90, 31
.God's Character. <small>.Royal.</small>	144, 21, 20, 61, 101
.Sovereignty. <small>.God is King.</small>	99, 95, 148, 29, 97, 24
.Messianic.	118, 41, 2, 8, 45, 132, 109, 22, 102, 16, 69, 40, 72, 89, 68, 78
.God of Nations. <small>.Zion.</small>	48, 76, 46, 84, 87
.Lament.	10, 141, 71, 130, 142, 85, 4, 64, 80, 74, 43, 55, 57, 26, 6, 13, 3, 120, 17, 143, 44, 51, 126, 59, 42, 77. 86, 70, 60, 38, 28, 7, 123
.Vindication.	54, 137, 83, 88, 79, 12, 56, 5, 58, 140, 52, 35

Sovereignty – Who has the right? Who has the final say? Euthanasia? Prejudice...if God created, do I have a right to say...(skin color, male/female, YOU ARE ON PURPOSE)

When we allow Psalms to be Psalms...

- It strips us bare.
- It is the nakedness of the human heart being expressed to our Almighty Creator.
- CAN I DO THIS?
- Can I approach Psalms this way? [i.e. Pr. Robin's testimony of PS27]
- Psalms are scripture principals already digested once.

Mapping Psalms
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character

Five Books:

- I. Psalms 1-41
- II. Psalms 42-72
- III. Psalms 73-89
- IV. Psalms 90-106
- V. Psalms 107-150

Doxologies:

- Psalm 41:13
 Psalm 72:18-20
 Psalm 89:52
 Psalm 106:48
 Psalm 150 [Doxology of entire Psalter]

This 5 Book division a shadow of the Torah? (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)¹

¹ Kugler, R. A., & Hartin, P. J. (2009). [An Introduction to the Bible](#) (p. 197). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

“Psalms of Ascent” in Pss 120–134),
Pss 42–83 all call God *elohim*, and thus get the title the “Elohistic Psalter”
Dead Sea Scrolls show no divisional structure – was done after these were written.

BOOK	V	I	I	II	IV
PSALM	144	21	20	61	101
Author	David	David	David	David	David
Genre	God's Character	God's Character	God's Character	God's Character	God's Character
Title					

HIGHLIGHT GOD'S CHARACTERISTICS LISTED MY REPLY

ASK for:

1 Corinthians 2:14NKJV	1 Corinthians 2:14 CEB
<p>¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know <i>them</i>, because they are spiritually discerned.</p>	<p>But people who are unspiritual don't accept the things from God's Spirit. They are foolishness to them and can't be understood, because they can only be comprehended in a spiritual way.</p>

BOOK V

PSALM 144 [2 Samuel 17:29; 22]

Author: David

Genre: God's Character

Title: **A Song to the Lord Who Preserves and Prospers His People**

Hiw Characteristics: Well nurtured = Prosperity. Peace. Deliverance. God will TRAIN us...there is never “nothing can be done now”...thinking in our head. LIVING DEPENDANT on HIM! David asks for help: Family. Finances. Security.

SEE: **Rev 21:1-22:5**

Me: Take refuge. Sing! Happy!

Psalm 144 NKJV	Psalm 144 CEB
<p>Blessed <i>be</i> the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, <i>And</i> my fingers for battle— ² My lovingkindness and my fortress, My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and <i>the One</i> in whom I take</p>	<p>Bless the Lord, my rock, who taught my hands how to fight, who taught my fingers how to do battle! ² God is my loyal one, my fortress, my place of safety, my rescuer, my shield, in whom I take refuge,</p>


Mapping the Psalms
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

<p>refuge, Who subdues ^[a]my people[the peoples] under me. ³ Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? <i>Or</i> the son of man, that You are mindful of him? ⁴ Man is like a breath; His days <i>are</i> like a passing shadow. ⁵ Bow down Your heavens, O Lord, and come down; Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. ⁶ Flash forth lightning and scatter them; Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them. ⁷ Stretch out Your hand from above; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, From the hand of foreigners, ⁸ Whose mouth speaks ^[b]lying[empty, worthless] words, And whose right hand <i>is</i> a right hand of falsehood. ⁹ I will sing a new song to You, O God; On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You, ¹⁰ <i>The One</i> who gives ^[c]salvation [deliverance] to kings, Who delivers David His servant From the deadly sword. ¹¹ Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, Whose mouth speaks lying words, And whose right hand <i>is</i> a right hand of falsehood— ¹² That our sons <i>may be</i> as plants grown up in their youth; <i>That</i> our daughters <i>may be</i> as ^[d]pillars[corner pillars], Sculptured in palace style; ¹³ <i>That</i> our barns <i>may be</i> full, Supplying all kinds of produce; <i>That</i> our sheep may bring forth thousands</p>	<p>and the one who subdues people before me. ³ What are human beings, Lord, that you know them at all? What are human beings that you even consider them? ⁴ Humans are like a puff of air; their days go by like a shadow. ⁵ Lord, part your skies and come down! Touch the mountains so they smoke! ⁶ Flash lightning and scatter the enemy! Shoot your arrows and defeat them! ⁷ Stretch out your hand from above! Rescue me and deliver me from deep water, from the power of strangers, whose mouths speak lies, ⁸ and whose strong hand is a strong hand of deception! ⁹ I will sing a new song to you, God. I will sing praises to you on a ten- stringed harp, ¹⁰ to you—the one who gives saving help to rulers, and who rescues his servant David from the evil sword. ¹¹ Rescue me and deliver me from the power of strangers, whose mouths speak lies, and whose strong hand is a strong hand of deception, ¹² so that^[a] our sons can grow up fully, in their youth, like plants; so that our daughters can be like pillars carved to decorate a palace; ¹³ so that our barns can be full, providing all kinds of food; so that our flocks can be in the thousands— even tens of thousands—in our fields; ¹⁴ so that our cattle can be loaded with calves;</p>
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Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

<p>And ten thousands in our fields; ¹⁴ <i>That our oxen may be well laden;</i> <i>That there be no [e]breaking[breach] in or going out;</i> <i>That there be no outcry in our streets.</i> [PEACE*siege warfare] ¹⁵ Happy <i>are</i> the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!</p>	<p>so that there won't be any breach in the walls, no exile, no outcries in our streets! [PEACE] ¹⁵ The people who have it like this are truly happy! The people whose God is the Lord are truly happy!</p>
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144:12 *well-nurtured plants ... pillars.* The royal interest of this psalm in conjunction with the reference to a palace might conjure an image of flourishing civic projects. The splendor of a palace and city was enhanced by ornamental gardens.

DRAWS ON THIS IMAGE: The Assyrian king Sennacherib (c. 700 BC) boasted that he adorned the city of Nineveh with a “great park” containing all kinds of herbs and fruit trees, and that he allotted plots of land for the people to plant orchards. In addition, he developed an elaborate irrigation system to keep the plantings lush. Similarly, fine architecture was a credit to any monarch who experienced success in his reign. Sennacherib spoke of the elaborate portico of his palace with copper and cedar pillars to support the grand doors. Such pillars were sometimes carved in human shape.

This psalm draws on such images to describe the blessing of offspring who flourish as the most important pride of any community (see notes on 127:1, 4–5).

144:13 *Our barns will be filled. Continuing the description of a prosperous society* (see note on v. 12), the psalmist speaks of agricultural fertility. Verses 12–13 allude to social conditions arising from covenant blessing (Dt 28:1–14) in contrast with those of a curse (Dt 28:15–19). Azatiwata, a Hittite official (c. 700 BC), prayed for blessing upon his own city measured in terms of children, grain and livestock, similar to Ps 144. These are the three most important components of life for people in an agriculturally based society.

144:14 *breaching of walls.* Wall carvings from Assyrian palaces illustrate the work of soldiers in siege engines that ram and claw at a city's defensive structures in order to penetrate the walls (**see the article “Siege Warfare,” p. 1157**). Once inside, the invading army could slaughter inhabitants and take captive the survivors. In addition to community blessings and curses, Dt 28:63–68 speaks of exile and captivity as the ultimate consequence of Israel's breaking covenant with God. The practice of deporting a conquered people from their native land and resettling them in a foreign country was well known in the ancient Near East (see note on 107:3). **Because such scattering and resettlement disrupted the social cohesion and stability, this policy was intended to prevent further rebellion of the conquered people against their overlord.** If the hope of the king in this psalm is realized, his subjects will enjoy the blessings of quite the opposite future: **a society that is at peace and enjoying the fruits of prosperity.**²

² Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (pp. 1016–1017). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

ISAIAH 23:13

SIEGE WARFARE

Assyrian siege tactics are known from inscriptions and reliefs. Supplies were first cut off from an enemy stronghold so that it would capitulate when facing starvation or death from thirst. Fortified cities were also attacked directly. For this, the attackers at times used scaling ladders. As the Lachish reliefs show, soldiers on the walls repelled such attackers by raining down on them arrows, stones or boiling liquids. An offensive priority was thus to drive the defenders off the walls. For this the Assyrians employed siege towers with battering rams in order to break through the wall. A frontal assault on thick walls took a long time, so the tower was run up with a siege ramp in order to knock off the top of the wall, which was more vulnerable.

Siege ramps were made of stone covered with tamped earth angling up the city wall. Since the towers were heavy, they would have sunk into the soft earth and become immobilized, so the ramps were topped by wooded planks to support the weight. The defenders, in the meantime, had countermeasures. Since the towers were made of wood and covered with leather for protection from archers, they were flammable. Defenders threw burning torches down on them, but the attackers doused the resultant fires with large water ladles.

When the defenders had been driven from their positions, the attackers could concentrate on the walls themselves. Rather than using a direct assault, they often used an oblique attack. Sappers or miners would tunnel under the walls, shoring up their excavations with wooden timbers. After the hole was considered large enough, it was filled with dry brush, which was then set on fire. This burned through the supporting timbers, which collapsed, bringing down the wall. The attacking forces could then easily enter the city, taking it captive.³

Psalm 144

This is one of those psalms that seem remarkably familiar: 'I have seen you, or someone very like you, before,' we say. Two-thirds of it turn out to be a reworking of verses adapted from psalms far back in the Psalter. **In the course of its publication history it appears to have gone through three editions.**

1. First edition

There is more to its David connection than the heading that it shares with seven other psalms in this part of Book V. Its framework is provided by several verses from 18, one of the David psalms of Book I. **That in its turn is connected with the history of David's reign in 2 Samuel, where chapter 22 reproduces it almost exactly, together with the introductory heading it has in the Psalter: 'David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.'**

Against the background of the reign of the great king, we may highlight four of the points that that earlier psalm makes.

³ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (pp. 1156–1157). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

First, what the Lord means to David: he is his rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, stronghold (18:2).

Then what he has done for David: he has parted the heavens and come down; with smoke, arrows, lightning, he has reached down from on high and rescued him from deep waters (18:9, 14, 16).

Thirdly, what he has made of David: he has trained his hands for battle (18:34).

Fourthly, what he has overcome on David's behalf: as David's Rock, he is exalted above all the power of foreign nations, giving victory to his chosen king (18:43–47, 50).

2. Second edition

These points from 18 provide a framework for the first eleven verses of 144. They are filled out by other lines that are equally familiar. Verse 3 (*What is man*) comes from 8:4; verse 4 (*Man ... like a breath ... fleeting*) is adapted from 39:5. Both of these are David psalms from Book I. Verse 9 (the new song and the ten-stringed lyre) is from 33:2–3, and the same psalm provides verse 15b, *Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD* (33:12). Though itself lacking the David heading, 33 also belongs to the first David Collection.

In other words, 144:1–11 is another mosaic, a 'creative adaptation' of existing psalms. The psalmist here does more than merely shuffle the pieces. The insertion of *What is man?* at verse 3 subtly alters the mood of the exultant opening quotation. Verses 5–8 turn the praise of 'He parted the heavens' into prayer: *Part your heavens, O LORD. Hands* now appear three times, in verses 1 and 7, binding together the new structure: the psalmist's hands are trained for war, but in the end it is the Lord's hand alone that will rescue him from the enemies' hands.

So experience tells him of the Lord's power (vv. 1–2), but also of his own weakness (vv. 3–4). Now he needs God to do again what he has done in the past (vv. 5–8). He repeats the praise (vv. 9–10) and the prayer (v. 11).

Finally, with verses 12–15, past experience and present need are followed by future expectation. On the analogy of the first eleven verses, the rest of the poem might be adapted from a psalm or psalms now lost; an obvious similarity is between the family portrait of verse 12 and that in one of the Songs of Ascents (128:3). The prosperity of the countryside and the security of the city complete the happy picture.

3. Third edition

As the second edition of 18, or rather as a new psalm based on it, 144 would have suited any of David's successors whose throne was under serious threat from hostile foreign nations. From the exile onwards there was of course no more Davidic throne to be threatened. Yet evidently the psalm came back into use at the restoration, king or no king, in what we might call its third edition. Even if there is no truth in the idea of a post-exilic collection of fifteen psalms running from 135 to 149, the Psalter in its final form is post-exilic, and we have to ask what 144 is saying to those later times, and therefore to our own.

Perhaps something like this. **Then and now, whenever God's people are under assault they do well to remind themselves of all that their *loving God* has done for them in the past, insignificant though they are. They can quite properly ask him to act in ways that even in modern times might be described as the rending of the heavens, a bolt of lightning, rescue from a sea of troubles. They know that his, and their, chief weapon is the truth of the gospel, to destroy the lies which (like Samson's hair) are the secret of the enemy's great strength. They are sure that nothing but good can result, even from the most disastrous circumstances, when God's people are taking refuge in the Rock.**⁴

⁴ Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, pp. 269–271). Inter-Varsity Press.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Psalm 18

God the Sovereign Savior

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:

18 I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

My God, my ^[a]strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the ^[b]horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I will call upon the Lord, *who is worthy* to be praised;

So shall I be saved from my enemies.

4 The pangs of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ^[c]ungodliness made me afraid.

5 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.

8 Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.

10 And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness His secret place;
His canopy around Him *was* dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.

12 From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and
coals of fire.

13 The Lord thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
^[d]Hailstones and coals of fire.

14 He sent out His arrows and scattered ^[e]the

foe,

Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.

15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O Lord,

At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

16 He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.

18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the Lord was my support.

19 He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;

According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all His judgments *were* before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.

23 I was also blameless ^[f]before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.

24 Therefore the Lord has recompensed me
according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.

25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;

With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

26 With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

27 For You will save the humble people,
But will bring down haughty looks.
28 For You will light my lamp;
The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.
29 For by You I can ^[a]run against a troop,
By my God I can leap over a wall.
30 *As for God, His way is perfect;*
The word of the Lord is ^[b]proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.
31 For who *is* God, except the Lord?
And who *is* a rock, except our God?
32 *It is* God who arms me with strength,
And makes my way perfect.
33 He makes my feet like the *feet of deer*,
And sets me on my high places.
34 He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You have also given me the shield of Your
salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great.
36 You enlarged my path under me,
So my feet did not slip.
37 I have pursued my enemies and overtaken
them;
Neither did I turn back again till they were
destroyed.
38 I have wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.
39 For You have armed me with strength for
the battle;
You have ^[c]subdued under me those who rose
up against me.
40 You have also given me the necks of my
enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.
41 They cried out, but *there was* none to save;

Even to the Lord, but He did not answer them.
42 Then I beat them as fine as the dust before
the wind;
I cast them out like dirt in the streets.
43 You have delivered me from the strivings of
the people;
You have made me the head of the ^[d]nations;
A people I have not known shall serve me.
44 As soon as they hear of me they obey me;
The foreigners ^[e]submit to me.
45 The foreigners fade away,
And come frightened from their hideouts.
46 The Lord lives!
Blessed *be* my Rock!
Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
47 *It is* God who avenges me,
And subdues the peoples under me;
48 He delivers me from my enemies.
You also lift me up above those who rise
against me;
You have delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord,
among the ^[f]Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name.
50 Great deliverance He gives to His king,
And shows mercy to His anointed,
To David and his ^[g]descendants forevermore.

Footnotes

- a. [Psalm 18:2](#) Lit. *rock*
- b. [Psalm 18:2](#) Strength
- c. [Psalm 18:4](#) Lit. *Belial*
- d. [Psalm 18:13](#) So with MT, Tg., Vg.; a few Heb. mss., LXX omit *Hailstones and coals of fire*
- e. [Psalm 18:14](#) Lit. *them*
- f. [Psalm 18:23](#) *with*
- g. [Psalm 18:29](#) *Or run through*
- h. [Psalm 18:30](#) Lit. *refined*
- i. [Psalm 18:39](#) Lit. *caused to bow*
- j. [Psalm 18:43](#) *Gentiles*
- k. [Psalm 18:44](#) *feign submission*
- l. [Psalm 18:49](#) *nations*
- m. [Psalm 18:50](#) Lit. *seed*

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

REVELATION 21:11-22:5

All Things Made New

21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, ^[a]John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said ^[b]to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

⁶ And He said to me, "It^[c] is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes ^[d]shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, ^[e]unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The New Jerusalem

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came ^[f]to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the ^[g]bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the ^[h]great city, the ^[i]holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the ^[j]names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand ^[k]furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. ¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. ¹⁸ The construction of its wall *was of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.

The Glory of the New Jerusalem

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine ^[i]in it, for the ^[ii]glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. ²⁴ And the nations ^[i]of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor ^[o]into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into ^[o]it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything ^[a]that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The River of Life

22 And he showed me a ^[i]pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

BOOK I

PSALM 21 [2Sa 10:19]

Author: David

Genre: God's Character

Title: **Joy in the Salvation of the Lord**

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

His Characteristics: Strength. Salvation. Generous. Available/Present. Bless. Goodness. Answers prayers. Joy. WITNESS. Mercy.

Does God give us FINITE answers/solutions or does He give us PROCESS?

God is AWARE. God will SEND HELP. God will NOT FORGET.

Me: Trusting God WITH my future.

PSALM 21 NKJV	PSALM 21 CEB
<p><i>To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.</i></p> <p>21 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ²You have given him his heart's desire, And have not withheld the request of his lips. <i>Selah</i> ³For You meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head. ⁴He asked life from You, and You gave it to him— Length of days forever and ever. ⁵His glory <i>is</i> great in Your salvation; Honor and majesty You have placed upon him. ⁶For You have made him most blessed forever; [Messianic?] You have made him ^[a]exceedingly glad^[joyful with gladness] with Your presence. ⁷For the king trusts in the Lord, And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be ^[a]moved^{[shaken].} ⁸Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You. ⁹You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, And the fire shall devour them.</p>	<p><i>For the music leader. A psalm of David.</i></p> <p>21 The king celebrates your strength, Lord; look how happy he is about your saving help! ²You've given him what his heart desires; you haven't denied what his lips requested. <i>Selah</i> ³You bring rich blessings right to him; you put a crown of pure gold on his head. ⁴He asked you for life, and you gave it to him, all right— long days, forever and always! ⁵The king's reputation is great because of your saving help; you've conferred on him glory and grandeur. ⁶You grant him blessings forever; you make him happy with the joy of your presence. ⁷Because the king trusts the Lord, and because of the Most High's faithful love, he will not stumble. ⁸Your hand will catch all your enemies; your strong hand will catch all who hate you. ⁹When you appear, Lord, you will light them up like an oven on fire. God will eat them whole in his anger; fire will devour them.</p>

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

<p>10 Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, And their ^[c]descendants[seed] from among the sons of men. 11 For they intended evil against You; They devised a plot <i>which</i> they are not able <i>to perform</i>. 12 Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready <i>Your arrows</i> on Your string toward their faces. 13 Be exalted, O Lord, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.</p>	<p>10 You will destroy their offspring from the land; destroy their descendants from the human race. 11 Because they sought to do you harm, they devised a wicked plan—but they will fail! 12 Because you will make them turn and run when you aim your bow straight at their faces! 13 Be exalted, Lord, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power!</p>
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2 Samuel 10:19 ¹⁹ *And when all the kings who were servants to ^[e]Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.*

PSALM 21

Ps 21 This psalm has been compared with a type of prophetic speech that was widespread in the ancient Near East called an “oracle of victory.” In the face of impending battle, a spokesperson for the king’s god or goddess would offer encouragement to the king. In Syria, a monument of Zakkur, the king of Hamath (c. 800 BC), describes how an oracle strengthened him in the face of a terrifying attack against his city. Other examples are common especially in prophetic speech of Assyrian prophets (cf. Ps 110; see note on Ps 110). In Ps 21, the words of an “oracle of victory” might be preserved in vv. 8–12. Perhaps a prophetic psalm, like Ps 21, would have been the source of confidence reflected in a prayer such as in 20:6.

21:8 *lay hold on ... seize.* The Hebrew verb used in both instances actually describes attacking the enemy with a weapon, not apprehending him. Most soldiers were right-handed, so one would not seize the foe with the right hand—for that was where the weapon would be held. The right hand, then, was used for offense, and it would “find” its mark. The Hymn to Shamash says that the god’s weapon will make straight for the wicked man and that there will be none to save him. In Egyptian reliefs and paintings (also at Ugarit) the king often strikes a pose with his weapon upraised in his right hand, while his left hand lays hold of the enemy. This verse is only describing part of that picture because the lines are parallel, not contrasting. Both lines describe what the right hand does.

21:9 *furnace.* The Hebrew word (*tannur*) refers to a cooking oven (Ex 8:3; Lev 2:4; 7:9). It was constructed of earth, brick and broken pottery and was made in the shape of a bell, the top of which was open for the chimney. Fire was kindled inside the oven, distributing heat to the inside

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

surface where the bread dough was placed for cooking. Oven heat, being more intense than an ordinary open flame (reducing fuel to very hot charcoal), served as a metaphor for destructive power (cf. Hos 7:7; Mal 4:1). Such punishment was also known to be literal. A Mesopotamian royal letter, possibly from about 600 BC, instructs a governor to throw corrupt priests into a burning oven. Such a custom, evidenced also in Da 3, undergirds the rhetorical power of the image in this psalm.⁵

Psalms 20 and 21

Although they are not bound together as closely as Psalms 9 and 10, these also, like that earlier pair, form a 'diptych', facing each other like two hinged panels. Particular words and turns of phrase, and a similar structure, are found in both, and their themes complement each other.

The Church of England's 1662 Book of Common Prayer contains, as its title indicates, forms of words—liturgies—for communal worship when God's people meet. It includes for use 'upon several [i.e. various] occasions' a prayer 'In the Time of War and Tumults' and a thanksgiving 'For Peace and Deliverance from our Enemies'. Repeatedly down the ages such gatherings have used such prayers, not least in the period of Bible history in which the Psalms were written. Psalms 20 and 21 relate to a time of warfare, the first as the 'Tumults' are beginning, the second to celebrate the 'Deliverance' as hostilities are brought to an end.

1. A prayer 'In the Time of War'

Psalm 20 is not just a prayer, but a mini-service. Its welter of pronouns, *you* and *we* and *he* and *I*, is confusing at first, but in fact they clarify the structure.

Verses 1–5 are addressed by *us*, to *you*, about *him*. *We* are the gathered people of God, the congregation. *You*, as it turns out, means the king, the Lord's anointed (vv. 6 and 9). The *he* to whom *we* refer is the Lord. This section is not a direct prayer, but an oblique one, like 'God bless you.' It is to their king that the people speak, as he is about to lead an army to battle: *May he* [i.e. the Lord] *send you help*.

Then in verse 6 *I* am speaking, an individual voice: a prophet or a priest or a Levite, or perhaps the king himself (if the latter, he would here of course be speaking about himself in the third person).

In verses 7–8 *we* speak again, about God and about our enemies, and finally in verse 9 we speak to God, about the king.

All this may seem complicated, but it represents a simple six-part rite (bearing in mind the *selah*-pause after v. 3). It may well have run like this:

- (vv. 1–3) address to the king (all);
- (*selah*) Scripture reading (?);
- (vv. 4–5) address to the king (all);
- (v. 6) individual response (the king?);
- (vv. 7–8) declaration of faith (all);
- (v. 9) final prayer (all).

The liturgy is bound together as poetry by the repeating of a number of its words, as a kind of rhyme or echo: for example, 'May the Lord answer (... answer ... answer), because we pray in the name (... the name

⁵ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture](#) (pp. 896–898). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

... the name) of the God who saves (... who saves ... who saves).' An inclusio, hidden by the NIV's *in distress* (v. 1) and *when we call* (v. 9), frames the whole: 'Answer *in the day of distress*'; 'Answer *in the day of calling*'.

2. A thanksgiving 'For Peace'

Psalm 21 mirrors its predecessor, not only in theme (before the battle, *May he give you the desire of your heart*, 20:4; after it, *You have granted him the desire of his heart*, 21:2), but in structure and language too.

It forms a similar six-part liturgy:

- (vv. 1–2) address to the Lord (all);
- (*selah*) Scripture reading (?);
- (vv. 3–6) address to the Lord (all);
- (v. 7) individual response (the king, or another?);
- (vv. 8–12) declaration of faith (all?);
- (v. 13) final prayer (all).

In the first six verses the congregation speaks not to the king, as in Psalm 20, but to the Lord. On the other hand, the 'declaration of faith' of verses 8–12 is addressed to the king. Again an awareness of the Hebrew tenses gives depth to the psalm. Those of verses 1–6 are generally perfects, looking back to what God *has done* in the (very recent) past. Thus encouraged, the king *is trusting* in the Lord (v. 7), a present confidence; and the imperfects of verses 8–12 are what we should call futures—as it were pictures of what is to come, the king laying hold on the rest of his enemies and the Lord's fire consuming them.

As with Psalm 20, we find words at the beginning which are echoed later—*joy, salvation/victory*, and (as another inclusio) *strength*. At the same time, *salvation* also forms a link between the psalms, as do *trust, right hand*, and the *requests and desires* of the king.

3. 'Upon several occasions' in those days?

By yet other links (20:8; 21:12) we can see how both of them connect with the great Psalm 18, particularly its verses 37–45. In the glory years of David's reign, which are the background to that psalm, Bible history describes a variety of occasions for which these two would have been appropriate: 2 Samuel 8, 10, and 12 mention campaigns against Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Aram. In later times, liturgies composed by David for the beginning and the end of such a campaign would surely have been valued by his successors Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Uzziah.

Jehoshaphat followed this pattern when he was mobilizing against an invading army. He and 'the assembly of Judah' cried to the Lord, recalling as they did so what the Scripture said had been done for Israel in the past in the Lord's name. Thereupon one of the Levites was inspired to declare, 'The battle is not yours, but God's,' and the choir 'stood up and praised the LORD'. Victory followed; the enemy was destroyed, and 'the fear of God came upon all the kingdoms ... when they heard'. Asa's experience was similar, except that in his case the fear of the Lord in some mysterious way actually brought about the enemy's defeat.

If *selah* does mean the point in a liturgy where Scripture is to be read, what reading would suit here?

Nowadays we might parallel Psalms 20 and 21 with one of these Chronicles readings, and in their day the Chronicles people might have related them to one of the aforementioned David stories. It is not hard to go one stage further back, and to imagine David beginning to compose these psalms ('May the LORD answer you in the day of distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you') with a key passage from Genesis in mind: the journey to Bethel of Jacob, his nation's great ancestor, to ' "build an altar to

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

God, who answered me in the day of my distress" ... They set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no-one pursued them'.

4. 'Upon several occasions' in these days?

There are no such occasions in these days. All that world has come to dust. None of today's nations, rulers, or conflicts corresponds to Old Testament Israel, her kings and her wars. But since God's people do still exist, though in a different form, the pattern remains the same, and the people of God today must face their conflicts with the same strategy.

First they identify with their King. He has offered the great sacrifice without which his enterprise and their hopes and prayers are vain (20:3). He goes out to battle on their behalf. Knowing from Scripture how his predecessors have been blessed (20:1), they look forward to his victory (20:4, 9), because it is already assured (20:6). They are confident that they will share that victory (20:7-8), since they belong, heart and soul, to him. The God who bound himself by covenant to Jacob and his family and to David and his nation has by the same covenant bound himself to their descendant Jesus and his church. They have therefore total confidence in him through whatever conflict may lie ahead.

If Psalm 20 stresses the identity of the King with his people, Psalm 21 celebrates the unity between the King and his Father God. He emerges from the bitter conflict of Calvary, and from every other conflict, crowned with glory and victory (21:3, 5). The *length of days, for ever and ever* (21:4), which for his Old Testament ancestors was either an exaggerated compliment or at best the promise of a long line of descendants, is for him literal truth. His appearing and his wrath (21:9) are scarcely distinguishable from God's (21:6, 9).

There is warfare and warfare in this life. What the world considers a war worth fighting may well not seem so to us. We have it on good authority that 'our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'. The closer we get to the kind of war that really must be fought, the closer we need to get to the King who will fight it for us, and to the rest of his people who will pray to that end with us. That will be the time for Psalms 20 and 21.⁶

BOOK I

PSALM 20 [2Sa 10:19]

Author: David **Genre:** God's Character

Title: **The Assurance of God's Saving Work** [Reflections of Years of living WITH Him.]

His Characteristics: He ANSWERS. He is AWARE. He will send HELP. He does NOT FORGET.

Me: Rejoice. Proclaim HIM.

⁶ Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 1, pp. 74-78). Inter-Varsity Press.

Mapping the Psalms 
 Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
 Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Psalm 20 NKJV	Psalm 20 CEB
<p><i>To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.</i> May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob ^[a]defend you[set you on high]; ² May He send you help from the sanctuary, And strengthen you out of Zion; ³ May He remember all your offerings, And accept your burnt sacrifice. <i>Selah</i> ⁴ May He grant you according to your heart's desire, And fulfill all your ^[b]purpose[counsel]. ⁵ We will rejoice in your salvation, And in the name of our God we will set up <i>our banners!</i> May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. ⁶ Now I know that the Lord saves His ^[c]anointed[commissioned one/messiah]; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand. ⁷ Some <i>trust</i> in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God. ⁸ They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright. ⁹ Save, Lord! May the King answer us when we call.</p>	<p><i>For the music leader. A psalm of David.</i> 20 I pray that the Lord answers you whenever you are in trouble. Let the name of Jacob's God protect you. ² Let God send help to you from the sanctuary and support you from Zion. ³ Let God recall your many grain offerings; let him savor your entirely burned offerings. <i>Selah</i> ⁴ Let God grant what is in your heart and fulfill all your plans. ⁵ Then we will rejoice that you've been helped. We will fly our flags in the name of our God. Let the Lord fulfill all your requests! ⁶ Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed one; God answers his anointed one from his heavenly sanctuary, answering with mighty acts of salvation achieved by his strong hand. ⁷ Some people trust in chariots, others in horses; but we praise the Lord's name. ⁸ They will collapse and fall, but we will stand up straight and strong. ⁹ Lord, save the king! Let him answer us when we cry out!</p>

2 Samuel 10:19 ¹⁹ *And when all the kings who were servants to ^[e]Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore*

PSALM 20

PSALM 20

PSALM 20 AND PAPYRUS AMHERST 63

Very few pieces of literature from the ancient world show sufficient similarity to a Biblical text to support the claim that they are both representative of the same literary

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

work; the amount of overlap is simply not sufficient to sustain such a claim. The primary exception to that is Papyrus Amherst 63, which contains a version of Ps 20 that is directed to the Egyptian god Horus (also called Baal Shamayn), rather than to Yahweh. Close verbal parallels line by line in the very same sequence show that these are two versions of the same psalm.

Papyrus Amherst 63 is perhaps dated to as early as the fourth century BC, though a strong claim can be made for the second century BC, and it is written in the Aramaic language using a Demotic (Egyptian) script. The papyrus contains a number of cultic texts. Two of them are hymns addressed to Yahweh that are not known from the Hebrew Bible. Hymns to other gods are included as well. Scholars disagree whether Ps 20 is the original composition, with Papyrus Amherst representing a paganized corruption of the Biblical psalm (the majority opinion), or whether Papyrus Amherst represents an original version that the Biblical authors adopted and adapted for praise of Yahweh. An alternative view is that both stem from an earlier non-Israelite version. The importance of this test case is that here we have an incontestable example of the same literary piece having variations that exist both in the Bible and the ancient world, though here the papyrus is a product of the Hellenistic period rather than the ancient world *per se*.

Ps 20 Prayers for the king (vv. 6, 9) were customary in the ancient world, especially in the face of impending battle, which is the case in v. 5. For example, a prophet's oracle regarding the safety of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (650 BC) ends with a prayer that the king be preserved alive in the context of a rebellion against him.

20:2 *support from Zion*. The temple was not only the place of God's residence, it was the center of order in the cosmos and the hub of divine operations (see note on 48:1–2; see also the article "Hymns to Holy Cities," p. 927). Therefore, in time of war, God would come forth into the battle to restore order (see notes on 48:7, 9). The temple of Yahweh (the "sanctuary") was built on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, which was viewed as the fortress (see notes on 48:3, 12–13) from which God emerged to do battle against the enemies of his people (see note on 48:9).

20:3 *accept your burnt offerings*. Perhaps as part of the prayer ritual before battle, the king would have offerings and sacrifices presented to the Lord. Egyptian iconography frequently portrays the pharaoh approaching the deity with offerings. In one case the accompanying text provides a fitting parallel to the prayer of Ps 20 as the king offers sacrifices and libations to the god whom he hopes will grant him life. Burnt offerings were a typical sacrifice in Ugaritic ritual as well, but the Ugaritic practice may not have necessitated burning the whole animal as in the case of the OT burnt offering.

20:5 *banners*. The Hebrew word refers to flags held up as rallying points in a military formation or battle, as illustrated in the organization of the tribes marching through the wilderness (note the military implications from Nu 10:35). In the Egyptian army the divisions were named for various gods (e.g., the division of Amun, the division of Seth), and the standards would identify

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

the division by means of some representation of the god. Holding high the banners was evidently a sign of victory.

20:7 *trust in chariots ... horses*. Chariots and horses were prestigious weapons in ancient Near Eastern warfare, and kings often measured military capacity in these terms (cf. Jdg 4:3; 1Ki 4:26; 9:17–19). For this reason, the multiplication of them was regarded in the OT as an act of misplaced trust (Dt 17:16). It was Yahweh, not military technology and numbers, who was to be the confidence of Israel in battle, which is the confession of this verse.⁷

BOOK II

PSALM 61 [1Ch 28:21]

Author: David

Genre: God's Character

Title: **Assurance of God's Eternal Protection**

⁷ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [*NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*](#) (pp. 896–897). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
 Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
 Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Characteristics: Hear(listen) Attends(Do something). Protecting our today...while covering our tomorrow.

Me: I don't wanna be here BUT You are here with me!!!

PSALM 61 NKJV	PSALM 61 CEB
<p><i>To the Chief Musician. On ^{an}a stringed [Neginah]instrument. A Psalm of David.</i></p> <p>61 Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer.</p> <p>² From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me 1.) to the rock that is higher than I.</p> <p>³ For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy.</p> <p>⁴ I will abide in Your ^{tab} 2.) tabernacle[tent] forever; I will trust in the 3.) shelter of Your wings. <i>Selah</i></p> <p>⁵ For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.</p> <p>⁶ You will prolong the king's life, His years as many generations.</p> <p>⁷ He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may ^{keep}preserve[guard, keep] him!</p> <p>⁸ So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows.</p>	<p><i>For the music leader, with stringed instruments. Of David.</i></p> <p>61 God, listen to my cry; pay attention to my prayer!</p> <p>² When my heart is weak, I cry out to you from the very ends of the earth. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I am</p> <p>³ because you have been my refuge, a tower of strength in the face of the enemy.</p> <p>⁴ Please let me live in your tent forever! Please let me take refuge in the shelter of your wings! <i>Selah</i></p> <p>⁵ Because you, God, have heard my promises; you've given me^[a] [Hebrew lacks me] the same possession as those who honor your name.</p> <p>⁶ Add days to the king's life! Let his years extend for many generations!</p> <p>⁷ Let him be enthroned forever before God! Make it so love and faithfulness watch over him!</p> <p>⁸ Then I will sing praises to your name forever, and I will do what I promised every single day.</p>

1 Chronicles 28:21

²¹ Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and every willing craftsman will be with you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service; also the leaders and all the people will be completely at your command."

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

PSALM 61

61:2 *ends of the earth*. This expression might refer to the earth's boundary with the underworld, a brush with death similar to the thought of Jnh 2:6 (see the articles "Death and Sheol," p. 833; "Death and the Underworld," p. 907). In the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic, the hero travels to the horizon (the edge of the earth), where he encounters the mountain through which one descends to the underworld.

61:4 *tent ... wings*. The reference to God's "tent" brings to mind the winged cherubim of the tabernacle and temple (see notes on 15:1; 2Ki 19:15). However, the imagery points beyond this to the metaphor of God's protective embrace (see note on 36:7).

61:5, 8 *vows*. See notes on Ge 28:20, 22; Lev 7:12; 27:2; Pr 7:14; see also the article "Nazirites," p. 242.⁸

CHAPTER 6

NUMBERS 6:1–21

NAZIRITES

Vows among ancient Near Eastern cultures from Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Levant reflect the following pattern: (1) The vow grows out of a situation of need or distress. (2) The vow is made by a human to the gods. (3) The vow is generally conditional in nature. (4) A responsive votive offering is made publicly at a cultic place at the conclusion of the vow conditions.

Restrictions for the Nazirite are more stringent than those for the priest; the priest need only refrain from fermented beverage during his period of service in the sanctuary (Lev 10:9). A Nazirite must abstain from all vineyard products at all times, defined in detail down to the grape hulls, pits and even the vines.

In Nu 6:3 the intoxicant beverages are listed as "wine" (*yayin*) and "other fermented drink" (*shekar*). Wine was the most common form of grape beverage, produced in the late summer and early fall in ancient Israel in winepress installations and then stored in subterranean bell-shaped caves for fermentation.

The "other fermented drink" (*shekar*) has historically been translated as "beer"—a common Mesopotamian and Egyptian beverage made from barley known from inscriptions and carved or painted murals—or as "strong drink" (a grape by-product such as brandy). *Shekar* had an alcohol content of 20–60 percent in comparison to wine's 12–14 percent. The emphasis here is total abstinence from anything associated with the vineyard, lending support to the interpretation of *shekar* as an intoxicating beverage

⁸ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (pp. 939–940). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

produced from vineyard produce. However, it is not drunkenness that is the issue here, but rather grape drinks or products of any sort.

The visible distinctiveness of allowing the hair to grow long and remain uncut for the duration of the vow (Nu 6:5) set the Nazirite apart from societal norms. In Mesopotamian and Mediterranean law codes, hair played a significant role in ritual and legal practices. In the Code of Hammurapi, cutting one's hair was a form of punishment and humiliation for bringing a false accusation against another man's wife in matters of property.

Touching or even coming into close proximity with a corpse was a common means of ritual contamination (6:6–8). To maintain the sanctity of a vow, a Nazirite could not participate in the standard ritual mourning for the dead, even a member of one's own family. Nu 6:9–12 provides for accidental contamination, whereby the Nazirite removes the outward symbol of identification by shaving the hair and offering it to Yahweh at the conclusion of the period of uncleanness (6:18). Restriction also included the Levitically prohibited participation in ritual associated with the cult of the dead. The story of Samson implies that the restriction also applied to animal corpses since he withheld from his parents the knowledge that the honey he presented them was gathered from the carcass of a lion he had killed with his bare hands (Jdg 14:5–9).

Fresco from the tomb of Nahat Beni-Amon, fourteenth century BC. On the right of the pictures, people are collecting grapes, on the left others are pressing grapes. While wine production was common in Israel, a Nazirite vowed to abstain from all vineyard products at all times.

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com⁹

Psalm 61

Symmetry and content, together with the placing of the *selah*, suggest that this psalm divides into two equal stanzas. If the psalmist is praying for himself in verses 1–4 and for the king in verses 5–8, the train of thought is disjointed, and the division is then so marked that the two halves seem unrelated. If the psalmist is himself the king, and in verses 6–7 is praying for himself in the third person, everything falls into place. And as with the second David Collection in general, we may take him to be David, and the occasion to be once again his temporary exile at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

1. Personal need (vv. 1–4)

He first puts into words, and of course they are the words of a prayer, how his need is felt. His escape across the Jordan and away to the uplands beyond means that he is at 'the ends of the *land*', as verse 2a could be translated, instead of at the centre of it, at Jerusalem, his capital. To say that he is at *the ends of the earth* is a wild exaggeration, but that is what it feels like. He may even mean that to him it seems he is at 'the edge of the world', about to fall off into the abyss; at death's door, in other words. In any case he feels a long way from where he would like to be.

⁹ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (pp. 241–243). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Along with this sense of being far—far from home, and in a way far from God, though quite near enough to pray to him—is the sense of being faint, in verse 2b. He is fainthearted, not as a coward is, but as a man *overwhelmed* by his circumstances is (that is the AV's word for it). He cannot cope any longer.

And how is his need met? By thinking of God as he knows him to be. None of the four graphic pictures of verses 2c–4 is new to the Psalter. The safety of the inaccessible *rock* we heard about as recently as Psalm 60, except that there it was the refuge of the Edomite enemy. David looks to God to give him the same kind of security, as he does in many psalms from 18 onwards. A famous Korah psalm has drawn attention to the *towers* of Zion (48:12), which David already knows. The *tent* too he knows, the 'sanctuary' of 15:1; and he has appealed for the shelter of God's *wings* on several occasions, including the last time he was a fugitive, according to the heading that prefaces 57:1. No doubt he did long for Zion's literal towers and tent, but if in this context rock and wings are metaphors, probably all four are. They provide our imaginations with the kind of pictures that can make our own praying real and vivid.

2. National vision (vv. 5–8)

Recalling what God is reminds David also of what God has done. The *heritage* of Israel is primarily the land, with the promises that attach to it, and that (says he) you have given to me; though at present I may be far from it, it is inalienably mine. Behind his vows to God lie God's vows to him. So on the strength of God's word to the king—2 Samuel 7 is the classic passage—David claims in verses 5–8 enduring blessings which are in complete contrast to the insecurity expressed in verses 1–4: increased days, *many generations, for ever*, the permanence of God's covenant love and faithfulness.

In praying for himself as king, he is praying equally for his kingdom, whose welfare is bound up with his own. Stanza 1 was a deeply personal prayer, yet with stanza 2 the psalm is seen to have a national vision. We can imagine David's successors also using the prayer, and they too will be bringing the needs of their kingdom to God. At the same time the form of it is such that the people in their turn can use it to pray for their king, and thus indirectly for themselves.

Nor do the fall of the monarchy and the exile put an end to its usefulness. The phrase *the ends of the earth* in stanza 1 turns out to have a new and unforeseen dimension when the nation of Israel is scattered worldwide. A still greater breadth of meaning is given to stanza 2's words *enthroned in God's presence for ever*. The collapse of the Davidic kingdom in 587 BC refocused the thoughts of God's people on to a new kind of king, the coming Messiah. The significance of the psalm is not being perverted, but fulfilled, when we see Christ in it. Rightly do Christians use such a prayer for their King's glory and his people's blessing.¹⁰

BOOK IV

PSALM 101 [1Ch 28:21]

Author: David

Genre: God's Character

¹⁰ Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 1, pp. 217–219). Inter-Varsity Press.

Mapping the Psalms 
 Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
 Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Title: **Promised Faithfulness to the Lord**

His Characteristics: Merciful. Justice. Comes to me. Defends me!(destroy slanderers). Avoids the haughty! Rebukes deceivers and liars.

Me: Sing Praises. Consider my actions/behavior in light of YOU. Avoid wickedness. Run from sin/perversity. Serve HIM. KNOWING GOD'S CHARACTER, HOW DO I RESPOND IN RELATIONSHIP TO THAT CHARACTER?

PSALM 101 NKJV	PSALM 101 CEB
<p><i>A Psalm of David.</i></p> <p>101 I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O Lord, I will sing praises.</p> <p>² I will behave wisely in a perfect way.</p> <p>Oh, when will You come to me?</p> <p>I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.</p> <p>³ I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;</p> <p>I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.</p> <p>⁴ A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness.</p> <p>⁵ Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy;</p> <p>The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure.</p> <p>⁶ My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me;</p> <p>He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me.</p> <p>⁷ He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house;</p> <p>He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.</p> <p>⁸ Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord.</p>	<p>Oh, let me sing about faithful love and justice!</p> <p>I want to sing my praises to you, Lord!</p> <p>² I want to study the way of integrity— how long before it gets here?</p> <p>I will walk with a heart of integrity in my own house.</p> <p>³ I won't set my eyes on anything worthless.</p> <p>I hate wrongdoing; none of that will stick to me.</p> <p>⁴ A corrupt heart will be far from me. I won't be familiar with evil.</p> <p>⁵ I will destroy anyone who secretly tells lies about a neighbor. I can't stomach anyone who has proud eyes or an arrogant heart.</p> <p>⁶ My eyes focus on those who are faithful in the land, to have them close to me.</p> <p>The person who walks without blame will work for me.</p> <p>⁷ But the person who acts deceitfully won't stay in my house.</p> <p>The person who tells lies won't last for long before me.</p> <p>⁸ Every morning I will destroy all those who are wicked in the land</p>

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

<i>Footnotes</i> a. Psalm 101:2 <i>blameless</i> b. Psalm 101:3 <i>worthless</i> c. Psalm 101:6 <i>blameless</i> d. Psalm 101:7 <i>Lit. be established</i>	in order to eliminate all evildoers from the Lord's city.
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1 CH 28:21

21 Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and every willing craftsman will bewith you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service; also the leaders and all the people will be completely at your command."

PSALM 101

101:1 *I will.* This psalm records the vow of a king, as though he were taking an oath of office. This backdrop is evident from the references to government ministers (v. 6) and the responsibility for the overall welfare of the holy city (v. 8). In this context, the commitment of the psalmist to maintain justice is first and foremost an expression of royal duty to God for good government (see note on Ps 72). *love and justice.* The Hebrew word for "love" (*hesed*) stresses fidelity, which is here coupled with "justice," highlighting the attributes of God that the king will emulate. These characteristics marked the virtuous king throughout the ancient Near East (see notes on Ps 72; 72:4).

101:6 *the one whose walk is blameless will minister.* The king in Israel employed officials of the court to execute the responsibilities of government (2Sa 8:15–18; 20:23–26; 1Ki 4:1–6; 1Ch 18:14–17), and the righteousness of his rule depended upon their effectiveness (2Sa 8:15). One Neo-Assyrian letter illustrates the connection between the king's justice and his officials, indicating his charge to them that they should render careful justice in each case they hear. In Egypt, officials such as the vizier were responsible, as agents of the king, to ensure the maintenance of cosmic order and justice. Pharaoh Horemheb (c. 1300 BC) claims that he chose men of discretion and good character, who were loyal to the throne and had good insight into human nature. Therefore, the integrity of government officials was of supreme importance, and an Egyptian tomb painting from the mid-fourteenth century BC portrays the pharaoh holding his scepter in one hand and extending the other to dispense rewards to faithful servants.¹¹

Psalm 101

¹¹ Keener, C. S., & Walton, J. H., eds. (2016). [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture](#) (p. 978). Zondervan.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

As a David psalm, and one full of protestations of innocence and goodness, what is 101 doing here, so far from the others of its kind (such as 17 or 26) in Book I?

The answer turns this latest example of the psalmist's apparent self-righteousness from something obscure into something illuminating. It throws a shaft of light into a hugely important area of human life.

We note four or five significant words in it.

1. Silencing and ministering (vv. 5, 6, 8)

It emerges that the psalmist is one who is in a position to silence slanderers (v. 5), indeed *all the wicked in the land* (v. 8), and one whom others serve as his ministers (v. 6). In Old Testament Israel this is of course the king, and Psalm 101 is by no means out of place in the company of the royal psalms 93–100.

As in Book I, *blameless* ought not to be thought the equivalent of 'bloodless'. On the contrary, it denotes a person of robust integrity. For the king this means (as Kidner puts it) a 'concern for a clean administration, honest from the top down'.²⁶⁶ The book of Proverbs often connects practicalities and principles in this way, and it echoes our psalm at many points.

The Proverbs style with its brief and pithy sentences is also here, so that the structure of the psalm is less like the organic growth of a tree than like the erection of a building, the building blocks being lines grouped in pairs or in sets of four. It has twenty-eight lines, therefore seven four-line stanzas. What follows is one way of combining these into larger units.

The opening stanza (vv. 1–2a) introduces the theme of integrity, the *blameless life*, and the covenant love and justice which as characteristics of God's rule ought to characterize the king's rule too.

The next three stanzas (vv. 2b–5; notice *blameless* again in the first of them, vv. 2b–3a) are about the king's personal values. Here the word *heart* is the link: he covets integrity of heart, distances himself from *perverseness of heart* (so the NRSV), and will not tolerate pride of heart.

Finally three stanzas (vv. 6–8; note the third *blameless* in v. 6) set forth his policy in public life, with regard to those he associates with himself in government. Their walk must be blameless, as his seeks to be. In the closing lines Allen pictures him as chief justice of the realm 'at his regular morning judicial sessions', expressing in his judgments 'his commitment to high moral principles'.

2. When? (v. 2)

The question of when the psalm might originally have been composed and used has received the usual variety of answers: an annual royal ritual, a king's actual enthronement, dates as late as those of the Maccabees in the second century BC or as early as David's in the eleventh. We could imagine David uttering one of the great psalms of Book I, 'In my distress I called to the LORD ... He parted the heavens and came down' (18:6, 9), as a thanksgiving for God's having answered his cry in this psalm, *When will you come to me?* (101:2).

But that cry cannot by itself turn 101 into the complaint of a person in distress, as a number of commentators suggest. Our psalm sounds more like 15 or 24, with David newly installed in Jerusalem and eager to bring the ark of God there too, as the visible symbol of God's presence among his people. The events of 2 Samuel 6 are a fitting background for all these psalms, and an answer to the prayer *When will you come?*

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

That was the glad morning of David's reign. As time went by it became all too obvious that not even David could live up to the ideal he had set for himself and his successors. In many monarchies since Bible times the royal court has combined the king's household and the nation's government; *house* means the first in verse 2, the second in verse 7. David was not in fact blameless in his private life (vv. 2a–5). He did set vile things—adultery, murder—before his eyes; he failed to distance himself from his perverse son, or silence his slanders. So his public life (vv. 6–8) fell to pieces as well, and he nearly lost his kingdom, as 2 Samuel tells us at length.

But the failures of the Davidic kings were no proof that the ideal was unattainable. Rather, they pointed ahead to a future king, a Son of David yet to be born, of whom it would truly be said 'He has done everything well,' and who one day would judge not Israel only, but the world, with justice.

3. Every morning (v. 8)

The public face of the royal court was in Old Testament days the king's personal involvement with government and with the judiciary. In Britain we still use the term 'High Court' in connection both with parliament and with law. Verse 8 shows us David engaged *every morning* with what the Prayer Book calls 'the punishment of wickedness and vice, and ... the maintenance of [God's] true religion, and virtue'.

Since the exodus story has repeatedly come to mind throughout the psalms of Book IV, 101:8 may remind us of Exodus 18:13, and Moses going one better even than David by sitting 'to serve as judge for the people ... from morning till evening'! (His father-in-law advised a spot of delegation before he wore himself out.) But there is something deeper here than the mere organization of a legal system. The point about the practice of government and law by David and his appointees is that he recognized his responsibilities towards his subjects. God had 'brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob ... and David shepherded them with integrity of heart' (78:71–72). It was some time back, moreover, that we read Exodus 18, and our readings for Tabernacles have brought us by now to Exodus 32. What do we find there? A Moses who descends from Mount Sinai to find God's people bowing down to a golden calf, and who thereupon both administers summary justice on the sinners and pleads to God for their forgiveness.

That concern for righteousness in the community is the great burden of Psalm 101. It is a righteousness that must direct not only the life of the people but also the hearts of its leaders. What nonsense it is to claim that the private lives of politicians have no bearing on their public duties! If (for example) their spouses can't trust them, why should anybody else? But the same applies to standards in the church, and to every Christian who has any sort of responsibility for other Christians—which ought to mean all of us. We all need forgiveness for having failed in our concern for one another's righteousness, and still more for having let our own standards slip in private, where no-one but God was aware of it.

The ideal stands. The Lord can wipe the slate clean today, and the challenge is renewed.¹²

¹² Wilcock, M. (2001). [The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God](#) (J. A. Motyer, Ed.; Vol. 2, pp. 110–112). Inter-Varsity Press.

Mapping the Psalms 
Week 4: The Psalms of God's Character
Wednesday Night Church Fall 2024 Series

Communal Close in Prayer of a Psalm: (read a portion of weekly Psalm together)

Psalm NKJV	Psalm CEB