



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 120-150

Week 1

Copyright © 2016 by Plain Truth Ministries Worldwide

All rights reserved. Written permission must be secured from the publisher to use or reproduce any part of this book, except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles.

Unless noted otherwise, scriptures are quoted from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Printed in the United States of America.

# *Before You Begin Your Journey...*

What could be more appropriate for this final volume of *CWR Bible Survey*, than a return to the book of Psalms? Bible study and prayer are two of the primary tools Christians use to draw near to God. These 43 volumes of *CWR Bible Survey* are primarily dedicated to biblical study and devotion—but prayer has been a constant theme throughout our studies.

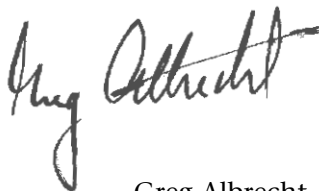
The Psalter (the entire collection of the Psalms) is not only the prayer book compiled for use by Jewish people after the building of the second Temple (after 528 B.C.), but the Psalter is also a prayer book that has been used for two millennia by Christians.

At the core of this unique common prayer book is the Great King—the one who rules over all creation, over all history, over all of God’s people. The Kingship of God over all of life is an important key in understanding the Psalms.

It is helpful to read more than one psalm at a time. Don’t stop with just one! Individual psalms—often so personal, partial or particular—should be understood in the light of the greater context. When a particular psalmist despairs of hope (Ps 120), pronounces curses on his enemies (Ps 137), or vents a short-sighted worldview (Ps 129), you can’t stop there. Read on. Embrace the larger theological picture presented by its sequel or another Psalm in the larger context. If one psalmist is faint with hope, the next is awakened. If one is angry and cursing, the next may be trusting and peaceful. Psalms from this volume that are best read in pairs include: 120-121, 123-124 and 127-128.

Psalm 136 is an obvious example of one that is best read aloud and interactively with a group, or in a liturgical setting. Other psalms (notably Ps 145, 147, 148) are composed with solo sections, liturgical promptings, choral parts or musical accents—all of which suggests group participation.

The Psalms may be read on many levels—individually or corporately, silently or out loud, piously or politically, sympathetically or empathetically—but always prayerfully and carefully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

# *How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...*

**1**—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

**2**—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

**3**—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

**4**—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

**5**—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

**6**—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

**7**—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

# PSALMS 120-150

The Hymnbook  
of Israel  
and the Church,  
Part V

# *Introduction to Psalms 120-150*

The volume you have in hand, the fifth in the *CWR Bible Survey* series on Psalms, concludes Book V of the Psalter. This 30-day cluster of readings begins with the “Songs of Ascents” (Ps 120-134). It is interesting to note that there are fifteen examples of this type of psalm in this section, but none in the previous four volumes.

The name of this type of psalm comes from the title, or superscription, that accompanies each psalm. The “Songs of Ascents” were sung during a religious pilgrimage en route to Jerusalem for one of three annual festivals (see Ex 23:14-17; Dt 16:16; Mic 4:2; Zec 14:16). These psalms may also have been “songs of the stairs” used during the Temple liturgy. Most of the songs in this group begin with a plaintive wail about a life of oppression far from home—then they close with a benediction of someone who has found sanctuary in the Lord.

These “Songs of Ascents” have a post-Exilic flavor, suggesting they were composed after 528 B.C. Yet the references to rebuilding Jerusalem and worshipping in the Temple may reflect later use or editing, rather than the personal or historic occasion of when the psalm was first written, which may well have been “of David.”

No dates accompany any Psalm, but by Jewish and Christian tradition, King David is credited with authoring the Psalms. Yet in Psalms 120-150, only 12 (Ps 122, 124, 131, 133, and 138-145) actually have his name on them. One is “of Solomon” (Ps 127), and the rest are anonymous. Many psalms with no name show signs of much later composition, such as references to the Exile (Ps 126, 137) or rebuilding and worshipping in the Temple (Ps 135, 147, 150).

Sometimes psalms are repetitive. For example, every verse of Psalm 135 either echoes, quotes, or is quoted by other scriptures. Psalm 144 looks like an updated re-write of Psalm 18, which itself appears in 2 Samuel 22.



Another collection of psalms in this volume are the five "Hallelujah" songs (Ps 146-150), which close out the Psalter. Each of these psalms is framed, front and back, with a Hallelujah ("Praise the Lord") refrain.

Many Psalms refer to God "dwelling" or "resting" uniquely among his people in the Temple or on Mount Zion (for example, Ps 132:7-8). Of course, a literal interpretation must be avoided. Solomon noted the figurative and metaphorical poetry of lyrics such as those in the Psalms when he dedicated the Temple: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!" (1Ki 8:27).

May you enjoy God's presence as you praise him through Psalms 120-150. And may you exalt him, with every step of this journey, and may we all worship him, saying with Paul, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17).

## PSALMS 120 – 150 AT A GLANCE

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary</b>
120	Anonymous	A prayer of deliverance from false accusers and slanderers.
121	Anonymous	Dialogue of confession and assurance.
122	David	Expression of deep joy and prayer for Jerusalem.
123	Anonymous	A prayer of humble pilgrims asking God for mercy.
124	David	Praise for God delivering Israel from powerful enemies.
125	Anonymous	A prayer, testimony and benediction of peace for Israel.
126	Anonymous	The joy of a restored people following exile and mourning.
127	Solomon	A warning about the futility of work without God. Thanksgiving to God for gifts of home and shelter.
128	Anonymous	Blessings of a God-fearing family. Hope for peace and prosperity of Jerusalem and Israel.
129	Anonymous	Prayer to withhold blessing from Israel's powerful enemies.
130	Anonymous	Prayer of trust from the depths of despair.
131	David	A confession of child-like trust in the Lord.
132	Anonymous	A solemn oath asking God to honor the covenant with David.
133	David	Praise extolling unity among God's people.
134	Anonymous	A benediction on the pilgrims who leave Jerusalem.
135	Anonymous	Israel's redemptive history.
136	Anonymous	Praise to God as Creator and Redeemer.
137	Anonymous	Song of plaintiffs returning from exile, with painful memories.
138	David	Royal song of praise celebrating God's intervention for the sons of David.
139	David	A soul-searching lament that affirms life with God from beginning to end.
140	David	A plea for deliverance from enemies conspiring to destroy the psalmist.
141	David	An angry plea for deliverance from snares of the wicked.
142	David	A lonely plea for deliverance from powerful foes.
143	David	A plea for mercy and divine guidance for a sin-sick soul.
144	David	A royal petition for victory over treacherous foes.
145	David	A symphony of praise.
146	Anonymous	A symphony of praise.
147	Anonymous	A praise of God for his special relationship with Israel.
148	Anonymous	Invitation for all of creation to praise God.
149	Anonymous	A call to worship and a call to arms.
150	Anonymous	Grand finale and great hallelujah.

# War and Peace

---

## Psalm 120

Do you ever feel alone, lonely, as if you are living on an island surrounded by hatred and war?

1. What kind of neighborhood has the psalmist been living in?
2. Instead of retaliation, on whom or what does this “man of peace” (v. 7) rely?
3. How do these “arrows” and “coals” (v. 4) prove more potent than the lies of the enemy?

---

1. In what respects are you like, or different, from this “man of peace”?

2. How can you live and worship at peace in a world at war?

---

*This psalm is the first of 15 **Songs of Ascents** (Ps 120-134); see “Introduction to Psalms 120-150” for further comment. **Meshech** to the far north and **Kedar** to the far southeast (v. 5) are Israel’s distant neighbors and symbolize the hostile, alien, and remote people among whom this representative Psalmist dwells.*

DAY 1

### **OPENING**

up to the Word

### **DIGGING**

into the Word

### **LIVING**

out the Word

### **WINDOW**

on the Word

## God's Insurance Policy

---

Psalm 121

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Think about your current life, health, disability and property insurance. Are there any gaps? What level of risk is acceptable to you when you buy a insurance policy?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Who is the watchman who never sleeps (v. 4)? Why the constant vigil?

**2.** What divine protection is covered under God's policy here? (a) initial, (b) partial, (c) group health, (d) individual protection, (e) local, (f) immediate needs, (g) long-term care, (h) eternal life, (i) total coverage.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Do you rely on God as your trail guide, insurance provider or night watchman? How so?

**2.** How do you feel about God watching you *all the time*? (a) comforted, (b) invaded, (c) troubled, (d) covered. In what way?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*He who watches or keeps Israel is a constant theme of this Psalm, indicating God provides 24-hour umbrella protection to pilgrims in a strange land. The Christian is likewise kept from falling by God's benevolent plan and purpose (see Jude 24).*

*“I lift up my eyes to the hills-  
where does my help come  
from? My help comes from the  
Lord, the Maker of heaven and  
earth.”*

Psalms 121:1-2



Photo by Gary Werings—PTM

*“Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel.”*

Psalms 122:3-4



Photo by Zach Wegner

# Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

---

DAY 3

Psalm 122

Where you live, do you enjoy freedom of worship, as well as peace and prosperity? Do you know someone who does not enjoy such blessings?

1. Considering the trip, why bother going up to Jerusalem (vs. 1-5)?

2. Where do Christ-followers hope to find peace (vs. 3-8)? (a) inside strong city walls, (b) in security forces, (c) in their compact settlements, (d) in superior numbers, (e) in corporate prayer or worship, (f) in civil and criminal justice, (g) by resting in Christ.

3. What are the people of God asked to do for and with others (vs. 6-9)?

1. Do you pray for the “peace of Jerusalem”? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel that New Testament, Christ-centered prayer should primarily be about a particular geographical location (the city of Jerusalem) or **any** geographical location, as much as it should be for the universal body of Christ?

*From the trials of the expatriate under fire (Ps 120) to the hazards of the pilgrim on foot (Ps 121), we now come to view **Jerusalem**, the beloved city set on a hill. What Jerusalem was for scattered Israelites, the body of Christ is for Christians worldwide. The Christian will one day experience the ultimate reality of God’s city—in heavenly splendor, fully unified and finally at peace (see Rev 21).*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## Set Your Sights Higher

Psalm 123

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

When things do not turn out as you had hoped, where do you usually look? (a) *down*—wherever my mood swings, (b) *all around*—looking for someone to blame, (c) *on things above*—see Colossians 3:1-4.

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What is the length of focus or point of view of this psalmist (vs. 1-2)?
2. To what does this psalmist liken his appeal for mercy?
3. What does the psalmist want from God, and why (v. 3)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. What do you want from God today? Why that? Why now?
2. Has God shown you his mercy—even when you didn't deserve it (which we never do)?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

**Contempt** or **ridicule** (vs. 3-4) is more murderous than anger. This psalm mentions the obvious—we can all relate to times when we endured contempt from arrogant people. Unfortunately, we ourselves have also expressed contempt for others. Indeed we pray, “Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy on us...” (vs. 3).

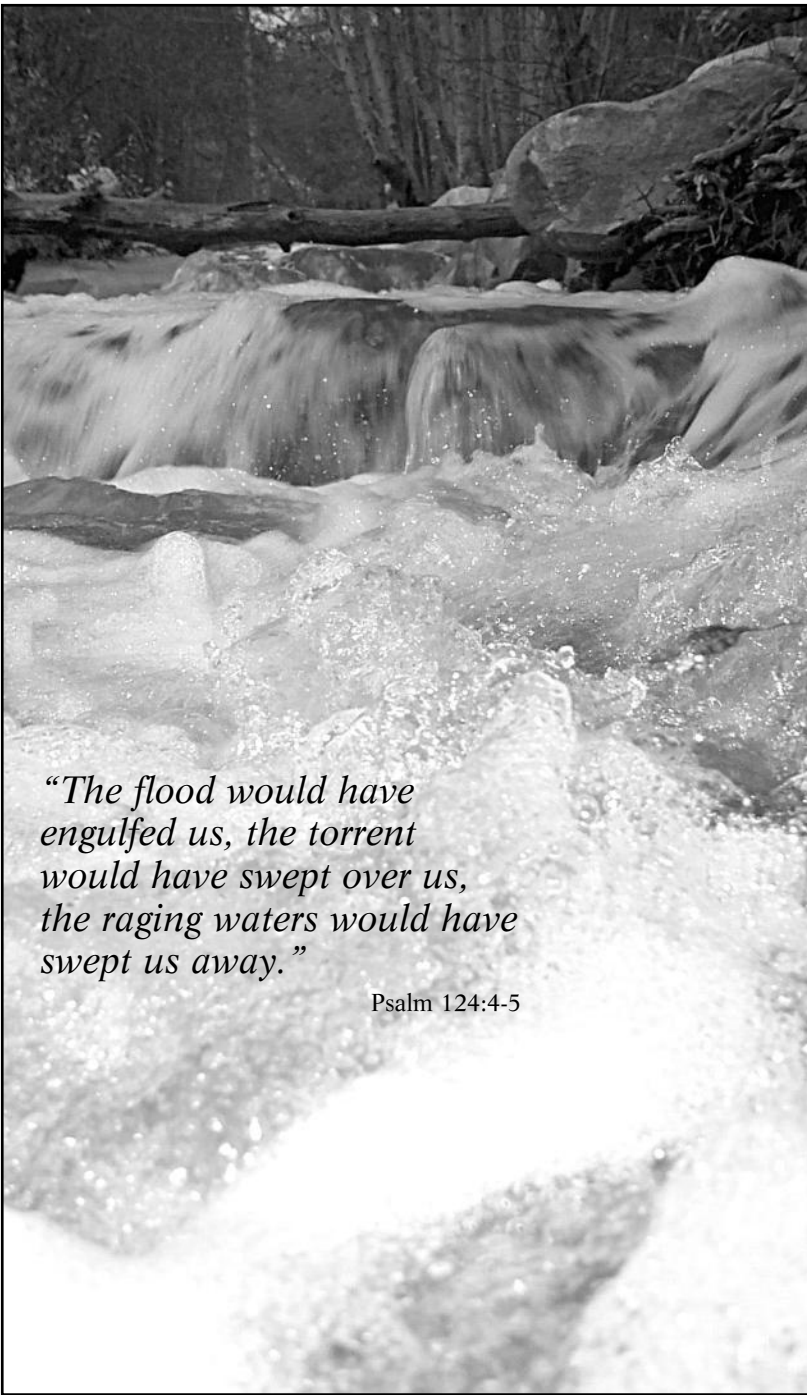


*“I lift up my eyes to you, to  
you whose throne is in  
heaven.”*

Psalm 123:1



Photo by Joseph Clayton—PTM



*“The flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away.”*

Psalm 124:4-5

# When God Takes Sides

DAY 5

## Psalm 124

When your side (that is, your team) loses, what is your usual reaction? (a) wait 'til next year, (b) immediate retaliation, (c) pray for vindication, (d) give up hope. Can you recall a recent example?

1. What is the nature of David's (or Israel's) predicament this time (vs. 2-5, 7; see note)?
2. Floods were not an everyday experience in Israel. So, to what or whom might this imagery (vs. 4-5) apply?
3. To what or whom does this psalmist attribute his physical and spiritual survival (vs. 1-2, 6, 8)?

In your experience, does God take sides? When? How?

*Here the psalmist praises the Lord for deliverance from certain death (compare Ps 18; 69). This serves as a sequel to Psalm 123, but its occasion is unknown. As a **psalm of David**, it could fit the occasion when Philistines sought to end David's life and Israel's hope (2Sa 5:17). But **fowler's snare** (v. 7) is an apt metaphor for Israel's later Babylonian captivity. The kingdom of David and the hope of Israel have been near extinction throughout history, their survival credited to God's intervention each time. Psalm 124 also fits persecuted Christ-followers, for their preservation is also in the name of the Lord (v. 8).*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## Do-Gooders vs. Evil-Doers

---

Psalm 125

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

When Hollywood has *good* triumphing over *evil* in the end, is that just wishful thinking, does such a thing really happen—or will it one day?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Whose leadership is unshakable, restraining evil and holding all things together for those who are righteous and good (vs. 1-3)?
2. How does one become “good” or “upright”? Is it a matter of what we do, feel or think? Or is it something God alone does?
3. What are the righteous like (see note)?
4. What will happen to them—or what will God do for them?
5. By contrast, what will happen to “crooked ways” and “evildoers”?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. In what respect are you “like Mount Zion” (v. 1)? Like those hands that are tempted to do evil (v. 3)? Like leaders who turn to crooked ways (v. 5)?
2. Pray for and seek God’s peace to prevail over “the scepter of the wicked” and “the land allotted to the righteous” (v. 3; compare Ps 122).

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Those who trust in the Lord* (v. 1) are “the righteous” (v. 3), “who are good” and “upright in heart” (v. 4), because of mercy that God bestows—all in contrast to “evildoers” (v. 5) who suffer God’s wrath. This theme resonates throughout the Psalms and Proverbs.

# Joy Comes in the Mourning

---

DAY 7

Psalm 126

Which better describes your life experience? (a) life is fair—I always reap what I sow, nothing more and nothing less; (b) life is good—the results exceed my dreams or efforts; (c) life is unfair—I have yet to reap what I sow—I feel cheated.

---

**1.** What “great things” has God done (vs. 1-3), and will yet do again for his people (vs. 4-6, see note)?

**2.** You have heard it said, *you reap what you sow* (see Pr 22:8). How might that maxim apply here (vs. 5-6)?

**3.** How did the captives react when they returned to Zion? (a) too-good-to-be-true disbelief, (b) with prayer and praise, (c) wept for joy, (d) back-to-basics of farming.

**4.** What challenges did they face when they returned (vs. 4-6)?

---

**1.** When has God blessed you “out of your socks”—so much so, that you thought you were dreaming?

**2.** What challenge or sorrow, pressing you right now, could turn into a song of joy? How so?

---

*The phrases **brought back the captives** (v. 1) and **restore our fortunes** (v. 4) are translated from the same root words in Hebrew (see NIV footnotes). Hence, this psalm has a reference or application broader than the Babylonian Captivity. Of course, its application for Christ-followers today is spiritually and eternally significant.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word