



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 120-150

Week 4

Prayer of a Desperado

DAY 22

Psalm 142

When are you mostly likely to feel *desperate*? (a) receiving bad news at the doctor's office, (b) traveling in a bad storm, (c) craving food that's not to be found, (d) running out of money. Have you ever felt so desperate that you cried aloud for the Lord to help you?

1. Where is David? (a) in a cave, (b) at a pity-party, (c) in a prison cell, (d) trapped in his affliction, (e) nowhere in particular.

2. What is he feeling? (a) lonely, (b) faint, (c) desperate, (d) overwhelmed, (e) abandoned, (f) hopeful. How so?

3. Where does the psalmist find faith and strength to continue?

1. When you feel like no one cares, how do you know that God cares for you, even then?

2. What is it you want from God most desperately?

This psalm places David in a cave, as in Psalm 57, which is a fitting companion piece. Between the two psalms we see that David's wilderness ordeal alternately produced faith animated with hope and despairing hopelessness.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Sudden Death Pray-off

Psalm 143

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you had any near-death experiences? Any close calls? What happened?

DIGGING
into the Word

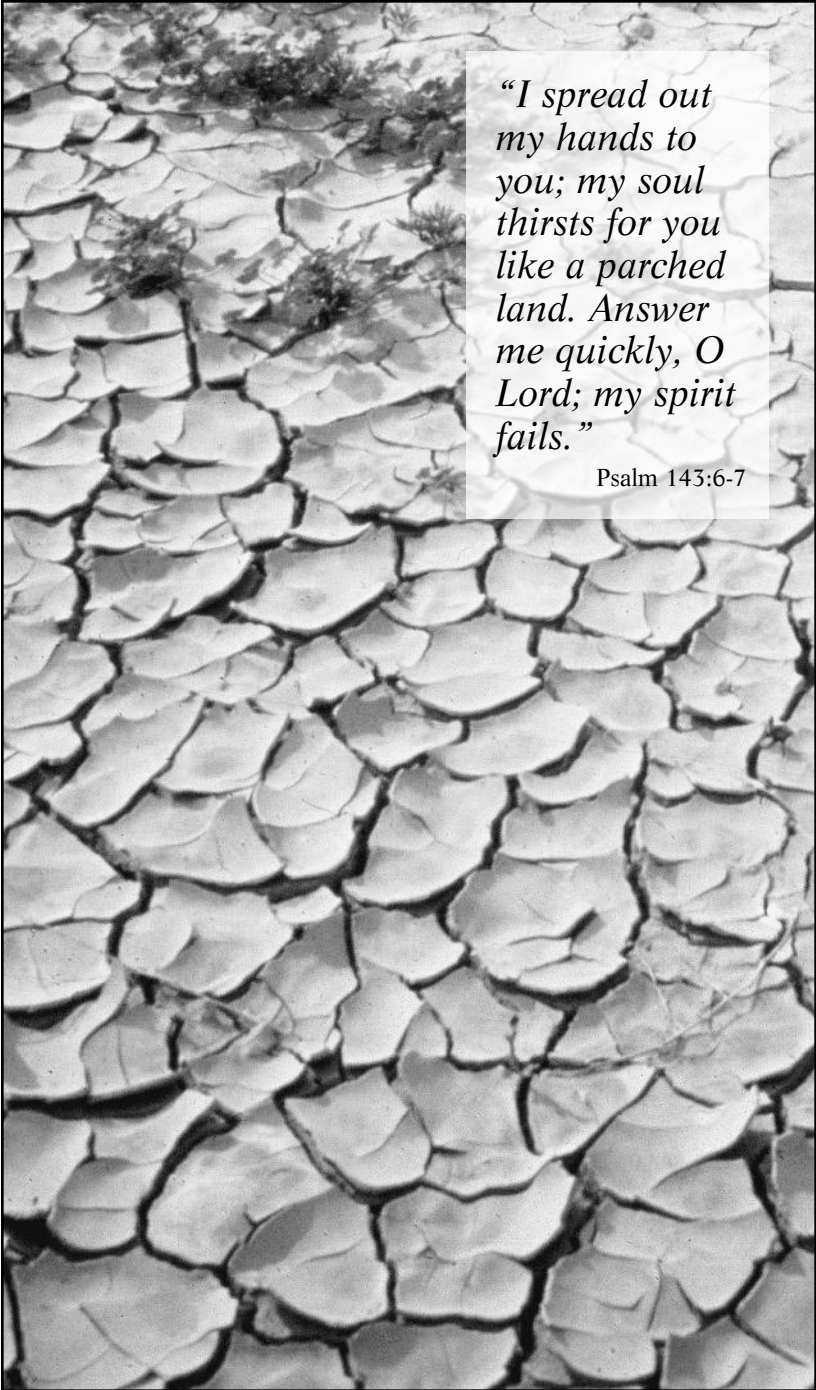
1. Where, or in what state of mind, is David as he writes this psalm?
2. The psalmist has no fight left in him, but is faint-hearted, dying of thirst, despairing of hope (vs. 3-6). Has the enemy won the fight? Why or why not?
3. What encourages David to hold on? (a) he remembers happier days, (b) he thinks about God's creation, (c) a good night's sleep, (d) the Lord's power over enemies, (e) God's unfailing love for his own people.
4. What special requests does the psalmist make of God (vs. 7-12)?
5. David bases his appeal on what? (a) extenuating circumstances, (b) his servant character, (c) his privileged status, (d) God's unfailing love, (e) God's favor toward those who pray.

LIVING
out the Word

1. When you go before God with a broken and contrite heart, begging for forgiveness, on what do you base your plea?
2. What assurances do you have from this psalm that God will answer your plea?

WINDOW
on the Word

The phrase "no one living is righteous," (vs. 2) confessing universal guilt or sin, is mentioned by the apostle Paul (Ro 3:10).



*“I spread out
my hands to
you; my soul
thirsts for you
like a parched
land. Answer
me quickly, O
Lord; my spirit
fails.”*

Psalm 143:6-7

Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom

Psalm 144

OPENING
up to the Word

Did you grow up playing war games as a child? As an adult, and by comparison, how do you feel when your nation, or any nation, goes to war with another?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. King David is feeling like a winner. What training did God give David for war (vs. 1-2)? How is God described here (vs. 2, 7, 9-10)?

2. What is David's attitude toward his foreign enemies (vs. 5-8, 11; see note)? (a) victimized, (b) victorious, (c) vindicated, (d) vindictive. Why?

3. Which do you suppose David preferred—making music, making war or making a family? Can you support your opinion from this psalm?

LIVING
out the Word

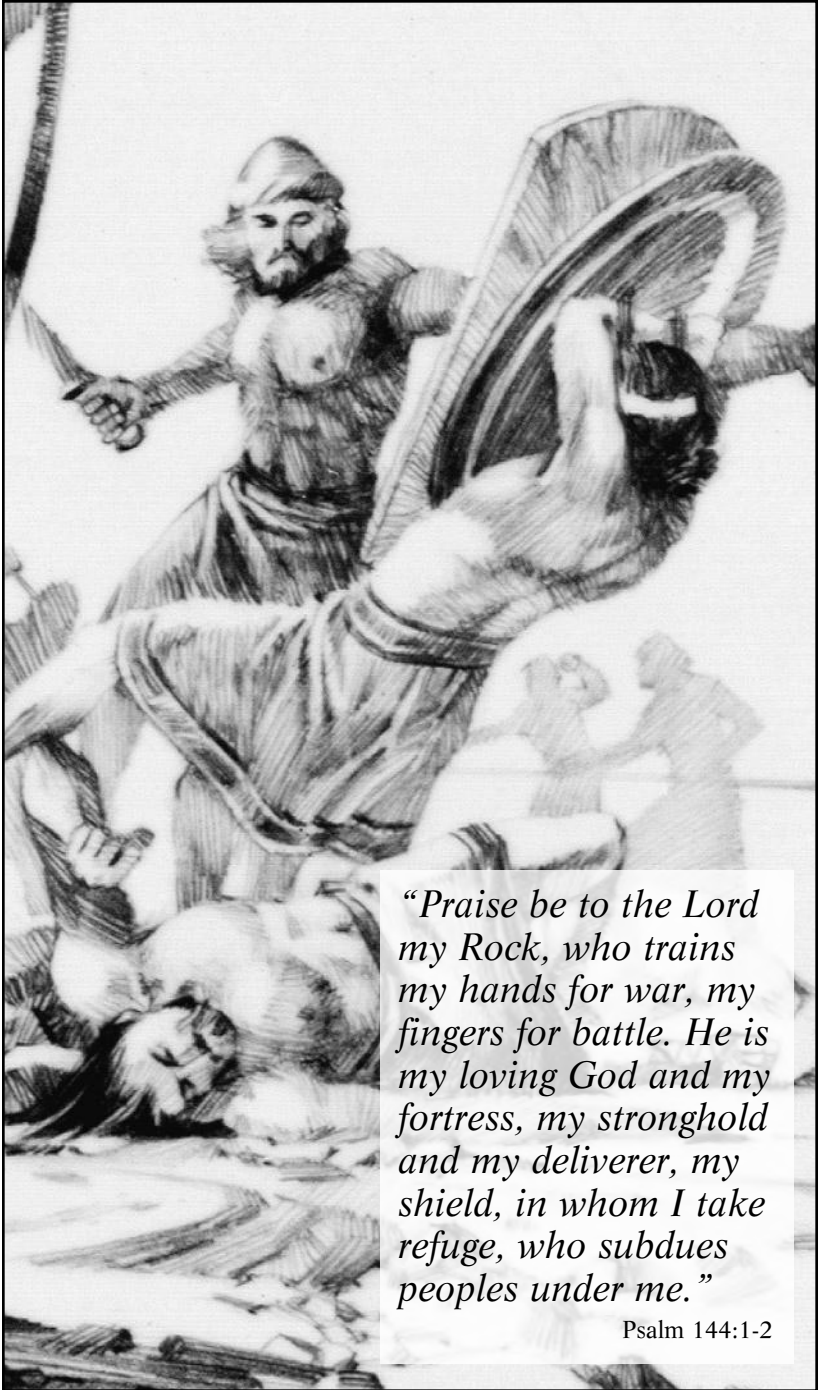
1. What dreams do you have for your children? How are you helping them grow up and get ready for the future they are hoping for?

2. If it was okay for David to call down thunder and lightning on his enemies (vs. 5-6), why was it wrong for James and John to call down fire from heaven on their enemies (Lk 9:54-55)?

3. Late in life, David's struggles were far from over. What are the current battlegrounds—or conflict areas—in your life? How will God defeat the enemy and bring victory?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Here we see David is not only a psalm writer and talented musician (v. 9), but also a **celebrated warrior** (vs. 1-2, 10). In celebrating his victories for posterity, David cuts down friend and foe alike (vs. 3-6, 8, 11), while magnifying the Lord (vs. 2, 7, 9-10). This psalm largely echoes Psalm 18, yet its ending (144:12-15) is unique and unfulfilled. It is idyllic, even ironic, given the unending tragic violence in the Holy Land.*



*“Praise be to the Lord
my Rock, who trains
my hands for war, my
fingers for battle. He is
my loving God and my
fortress, my stronghold
and my deliverer, my
shield, in whom I take
refuge, who subdues
peoples under me.”*

Psalm 144:1-2

How Do You Say P-R-A-I-S-E?

Psalm 145

OPENING
up to the Word

Were you praised as a kid—even if you were not attractive, athletic, smart or popular?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why promise to praise God (vs. 1-2, 21)? (a) so we won't forget, (b) intentions count, (c) to develop a daily habit of worship, (d) because God is worthy, (e) to set an example for others.

2. Examine the various couplets or stanzas that extol God (vs. 3-7, 8-13a, 13b-16, 17-20). Which ones praise him for his mighty acts? Which ones praise God for his attributes?

3. Stories about God's greatness are passed down from one generation to the next (vs. 4-5). From what you know of David and his generation, what family stories or life experiences lie behind these generalized exaltations of God?

4. God is clearly active, doing good in the lives of his people (vs. 17-20). When did David have such kindness shown toward him?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Does this psalm help you get to know God better? In what way?

2. Using an acrostic (see note below), note the exchanges heard around your family table: (a) approval, (b) blame, (c) criticism, (d) duties, (e) encouragement.

WINDOW
on the Word

*Psalm 145 (also Ps 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119) uses an **acrostic** device, where each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Here David uses the whole alphabet to preach beyond his individual experience of God (as Rock, Fortress, Deliverer), and to praise God for his universal care throughout all generations.*



“They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds.”

Psalm 145:5-6

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free....”

Psalm 146:7



Helping Hands and Heavenly Hope

DAY 26

Psalm 146

What point in your past would you describe as the neediest? Where did you turn for help or hope, or did you? Why or why not?

1. Why can't trusting princes (that is, government or political regimes) ultimately save us (v. 3)? What about religious institutions—can we trust them to save us?

2. What happens to the best-laid plans of mere mortals (vs. 3-4)? Where then does lasting help and hope come from (vs. 5-6)?

3. Who are the groups that God takes a special interest in (vs. 7-9)? What do they have in common?

4. What is the basis for praising God in this context (vs. 1-2, 10)?

1. Following God's Word, which will you focus more of your limited time and energy doing?

- Be kind or generous in showing extra concern for the needy.
- Be savvy in frustrating "the ways of the wicked (v. 9)."
- Be cautious in trusting people with money, power or plans.
- Rely on God for all your needs.

2. Why did you make the choice you did?

*God shows **special concern for the needy** (vs. 5-9) and frustrates the ways of the wicked who do not do likewise (v. 10).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word

Israel Set Apart for God

Psalm 147

OPENING
up to the Word

When you were growing up, were you treated as special in any way? Ever singled out for a special class, athletic team, extracurricular project, merit status or special assignment? What example comes to mind?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What is most “pleasant and fitting” about praising God at this time (vs. 1, 7, 12, 20)? What one reason sums up all the special mercies shown here?

2. What musical instruments, voices and choral parts (vs. 1-6, 7-11, 12-20) are invoked in this praise celebration?

3. According to this psalm, what sets Israel apart from every other nation in history (v. 20)? (a) crops are plentiful, (b) families are descended from Abraham, (c) exiles are chosen and gathered by God, (d) special revelation comes to them from God.

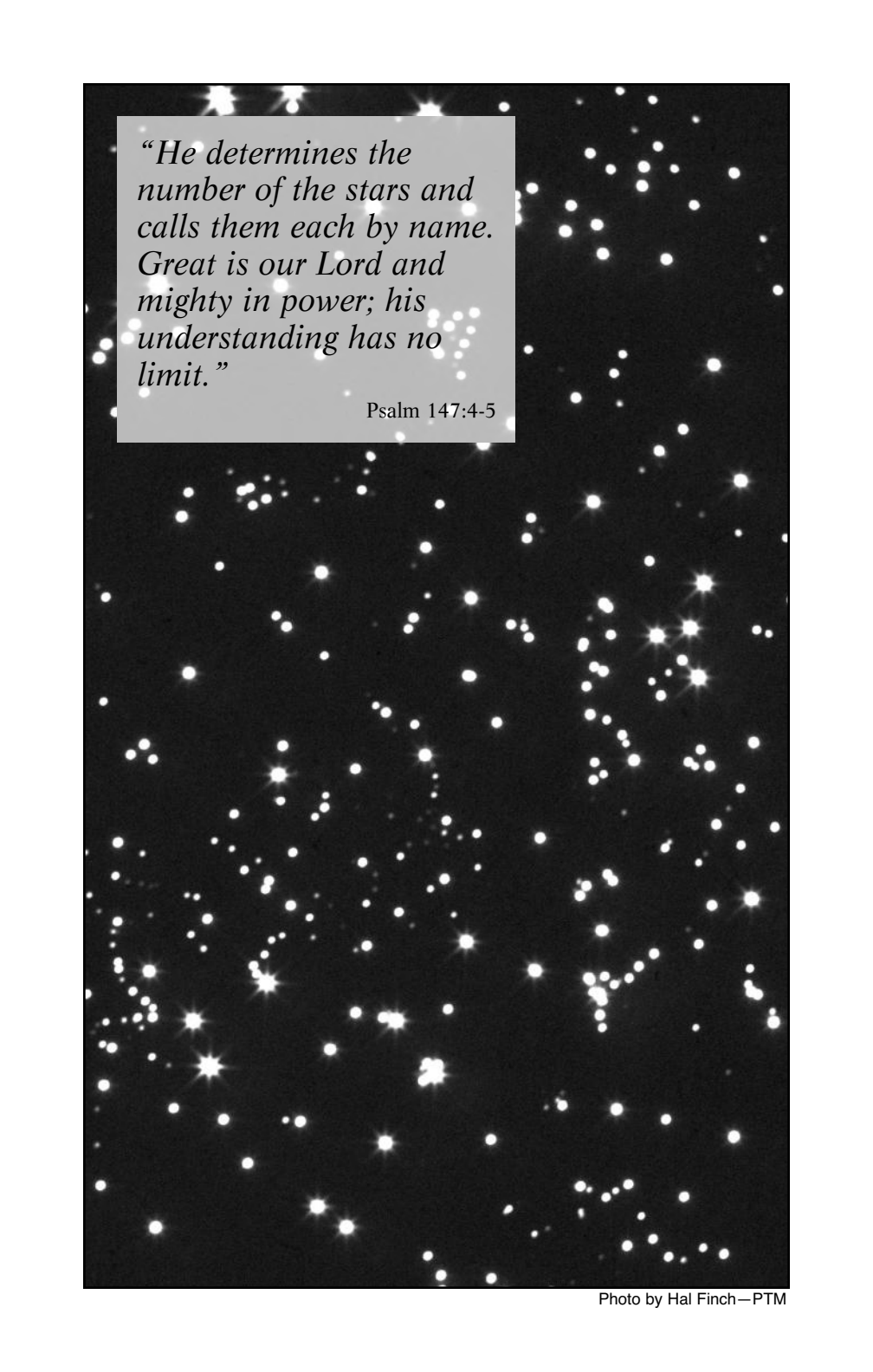
4. In this psalm, what is God like? (a) a parent or physician, (b) architect or builder, (c) gardener or farmer, (d) law-giver or teacher. How?

5. What response is called for, given all that God has done for Israel? (a) praise, (b) humility, (c) music-making, (d) hope, (e) obedience. Other responses?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Special blessings and hardships make Israel a people set apart from others (vs. 12-20). Have you experienced both blessings and hardships?

2. What does it mean for you to put your hope in the Lord?

A black and white photograph of a starry night sky. The stars are of various sizes and brightness, some appearing as sharp points of light with diffraction spikes, while others are softer and more blurred. The background is a deep, dark black. In the upper left quadrant, there is a semi-transparent grey rectangular box containing text.

*“He determines the
number of the stars and
calls them each by name.
Great is our Lord and
mighty in power; his
understanding has no
limit.”*

Psalm 147:4-5

Psalm 148

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever cared for a pet who thanked you for sustaining its life? If your pet could talk, what do you think it would say to its *real* Master?

DIGGING
into the Word

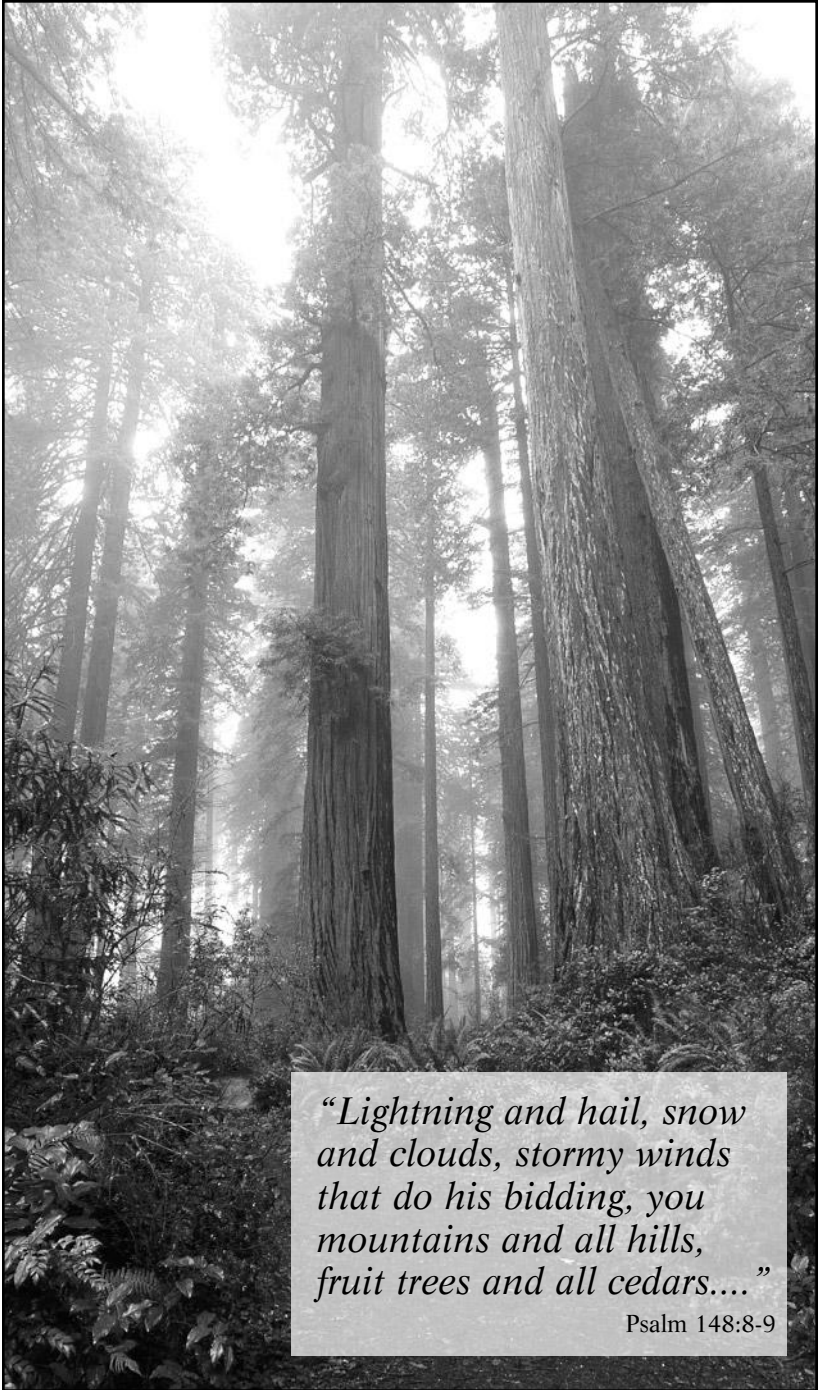
1. What instrumental pieces, voices, special effects and choral parts (vs. 1-6, 7-12) are invoked in this praise celebration?
2. Why do you think all nature is called on to praise God (vs. 13-14)?
3. Look again at the natural elements that are told to praise God. How does each element bring praise to God?
4. Who benefits more from this worship—God, humanity or all of creation? How?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What kind of worship draws you closer to God's heart? If you feel far away, why do you?
2. What could you apply from the worshippers in this psalm that would draw you closer to God?

WINDOW
on the Word

Its location near the end of the Psalter suggests that this psalm was intended to wrap things up on a high note or grand finale, much like the symphony of fireworks that explodes at the end of a July 4 celebration in the United States.



*“Lightning and hail, snow
and clouds, stormy winds
that do his bidding, you
mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars....”*

Psalm 148:8-9

Worship That Leads to War

Psalm 149

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you feel that corporate worship of God, in a building, with ceremonies, liturgy and specific observances/traditions is necessary to worship God? Can a Christ-follower worship God alone or where “two or three” are gathered together?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What instrumental pieces, voices and special directions come into play in this “new song” to the Lord?
2. How can believers both praise God AND wage war? (a) can’t be done, (b) Christian “soldiers” must establish and enforce God’s laws, (c) we should beat swords into plowshares (Is 2:4).

LIVING
out the Word

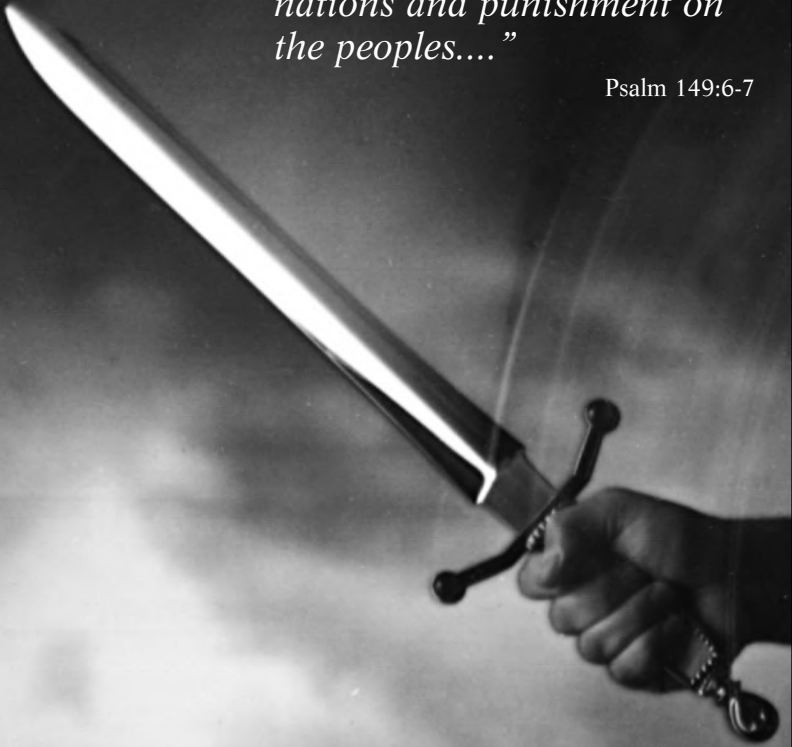
1. There are many times, historically and in the present, when a religious institution beats the drums of war. As Christ-followers, what should our response be?

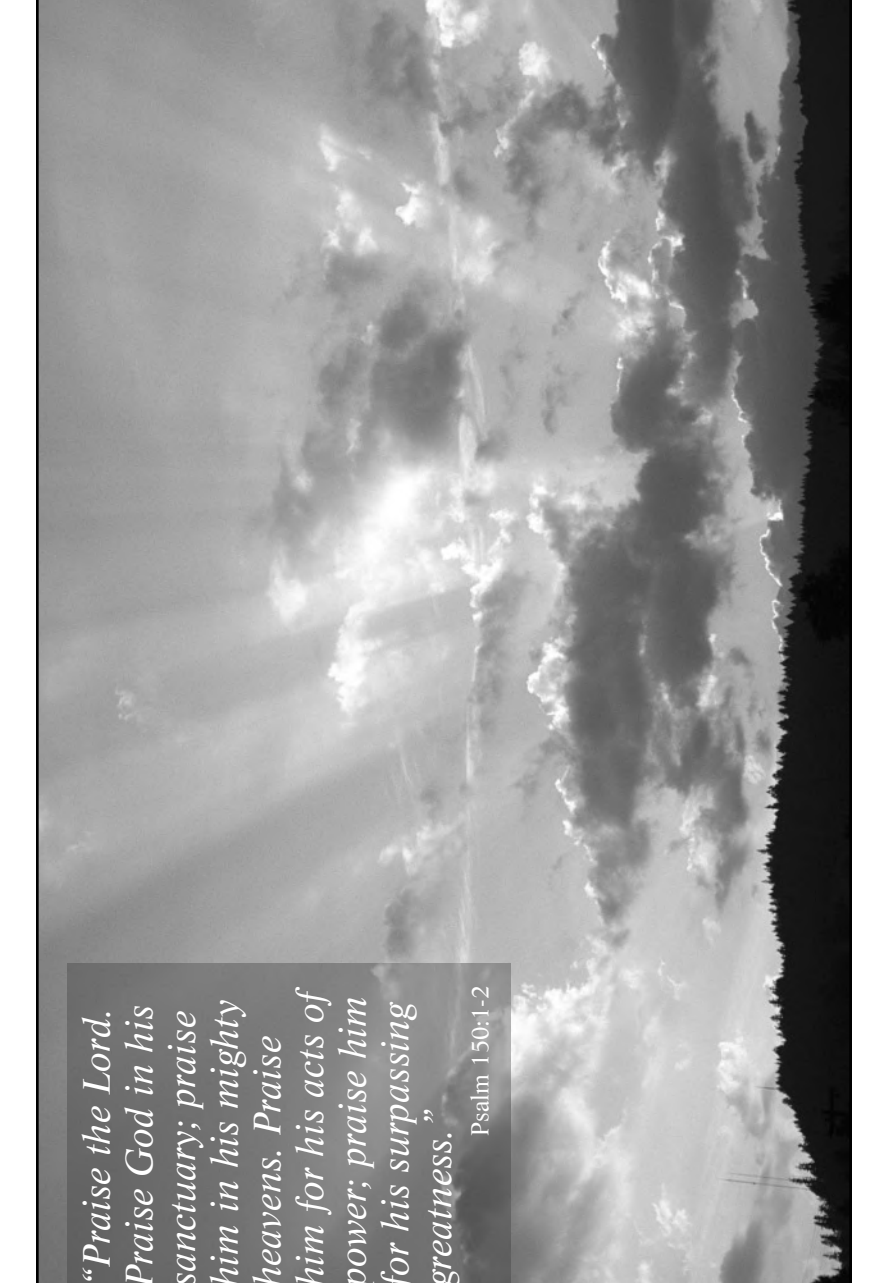
WINDOW
on the Word

*The **honor and glory** (vs. 5, 9) conferred on this assembly of saints (vs. 1, 5, 9) is on the occasion of their receiving salvation (v. 4). These Old Testament saints wield both words of **praise** and the sword of retributive **justice** (v. 6). Compare that to New Testament saints who wield only the sword of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, or the sword of the Word (2Co 6:7; 10:3-6; Eph 6:12, 17; Heb 4:12). Is retribution ever a part of the new covenant? See 2 Corinthians 5:18.*

*“May the praise of God be in
their mouths and a double-
edged sword in their hands,
to inflict vengeance on the
nations and punishment on
the peoples....”*

Psalm 149:6-7





*“Praise the Lord.
Praise God in his
sanctuary; praise
him in his mighty
heavens. Praise
him for his acts of
power; praise him
for his surpassing
greatness.”*

Psalm 150:1-2

Grand Finale of Worship

DAY 30

Psalm 150

Do you like music that is tightly orchestrated, loosely spontaneous or unpredictable? Why?

1. What do you imagine this music of ancient Israel would sound like? (a) natural, (b) unnatural, (c) symphonic, (d) cacophonous, (e) ear-splitting.

2. If you had been a member of this music choral/instrumental group, what part would you have played?

3. Why is no reason given here for praising the Lord?

1. This final doxology ends with a loud “Praise the Lord!” How can you, like the psalmist and the Israelites, praise God with your mind, heart and body—plus anything else you can make music with?

A doxology is a declaration of praise to God. This ringing doxology, pulling out all the stops, moves from one place of worship (v. 1), to worship themes (v. 2), to worship instruments (vs. 3-5), to a worldwide choir (v. 6).

OPENING

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