



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 31-60

Week 3



*“Listen, O daughter,
consider and give
ear: Forget your
people and your
father’s house.”*

Psalm 45:10

Royal Wedding Song

DAY 15

Psalm 45

Have you ever seen a royal wedding? What impressed you most about the ceremony?

1. What does the bride in this psalm think or feel about marrying a king? (a) wildly happy, (b) frightened, (c) unworthy, (d) worried about what to wear.
2. What parts of this wedding song seem to be flattery?
3. Which parts seem suitable only for Israelite kings?
4. Which parts might be suitable for any wedding (even yours)?
5. Which parts of this psalm might apply, best or exclusively, to Christ the king (see Heb 1:8-9)?
6. Does Christian teaching echo, extend, reform or negate the marital advice of verses 10-11? How so?

1. Consider this wedding as a picture of the relationship between God and his people (compare Eph 5:31-32; Rev 19:6-10). What might this psalm tell you about your role in that spiritual marriage (vs. 10-15)? About your heritage in the Lord (vs. 16-17)? About God's gracious love for you?
2. How does your relationship to the Jesus the King compare to that of the precious, loyal and pure bride pictured here?

*This **royal wedding psalm** is not so much to or about God, as it is an ode to or about a human king. Originally written for Solomon or one of his descendants who was to marry a foreign princess, this psalm took on another meaning for Israel and the church. Early Christians used this psalm, allegorically, to relate as a bride to the sovereign God or Jesus the king. Because this psalm is grounded in a culture so remote from ours, it may be difficult to relate to on a personal level.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Psalm 46

OPENING
up to the Word

At the times when everything seemed to be falling apart in your life, have you been aware of the strength and comfort of Jesus?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What events seem to be in view here (vs. 2-3, 6)? (a) a natural disaster, (b) a stormy relationship, (c) a political or military crisis, (d) events of legendary proportions.

3. Do these events seem local or global? Past, present or future? Imagined or real? Material or spiritual?

5. Why is the psalmist he so confident through all the chaos?

6. There are at least seven titles or qualities that God is known by in this psalm. What does each say about God?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Are you struggling with any “storms” or “catastrophes”? Do national or international tragedies bother you, or just personal ones?

2. This psalm is made famous in Martin Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” How can Jesus Christ be your mighty fortress in the midst of your struggles?

3. What would you have to stop or start doing in order to “be still and know God”?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Though the earth shakes and the nations rage, “the Lord Almighty is with us” (vs. 7, 11). He rules from his throne in the **city of God** (v. 4, here meaning something transcendent or heavenly, symbolized by the earthly Jerusalem). God also erupts from the depths as a marvelous life-giving **river** (v. 4, another metaphor, as there was no river running through the physical city). The climactic oracle, **be still and know** (vs. 10), is not a summons to quiet meditation, but better translated, “Be silent!”*

Give God a Royal Hand!

DAY 17

Psalm 47

In your field of expertise or area of special interest, who is considered “the king”? What has that “king of ____” done to deserve such acclaim?

1. In what sense is the Lord the “great king of all the earth” (vs. 2, 7) when most people ignore or disobey him?
2. Looking at the Old Testament through the lens of the New, how are we to understand God “subduing nations under us” or “peoples under our feet” (vs. 3)?

1. What would it mean for you and your family to acknowledge Jesus as King? (a) health and wealth here and now, (b) a more moral and pious lifestyle, (c) full rest and absolute confidence in the completed work of Jesus.
2. Has the awesome power and love of Jesus made you want to shout for joy?

*This **enthronement psalm** may have been used originally during the people’s annual procession to the Temple, celebrating God’s deliverance of Jerusalem. In keeping with an Old Testament worldview, the tone is somewhat nationalistic, portraying Israel in a dominant role. But from a New Testament perspective, this psalm is prophetic and far-reaching in its picture of God’s final enthronement over all nations.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

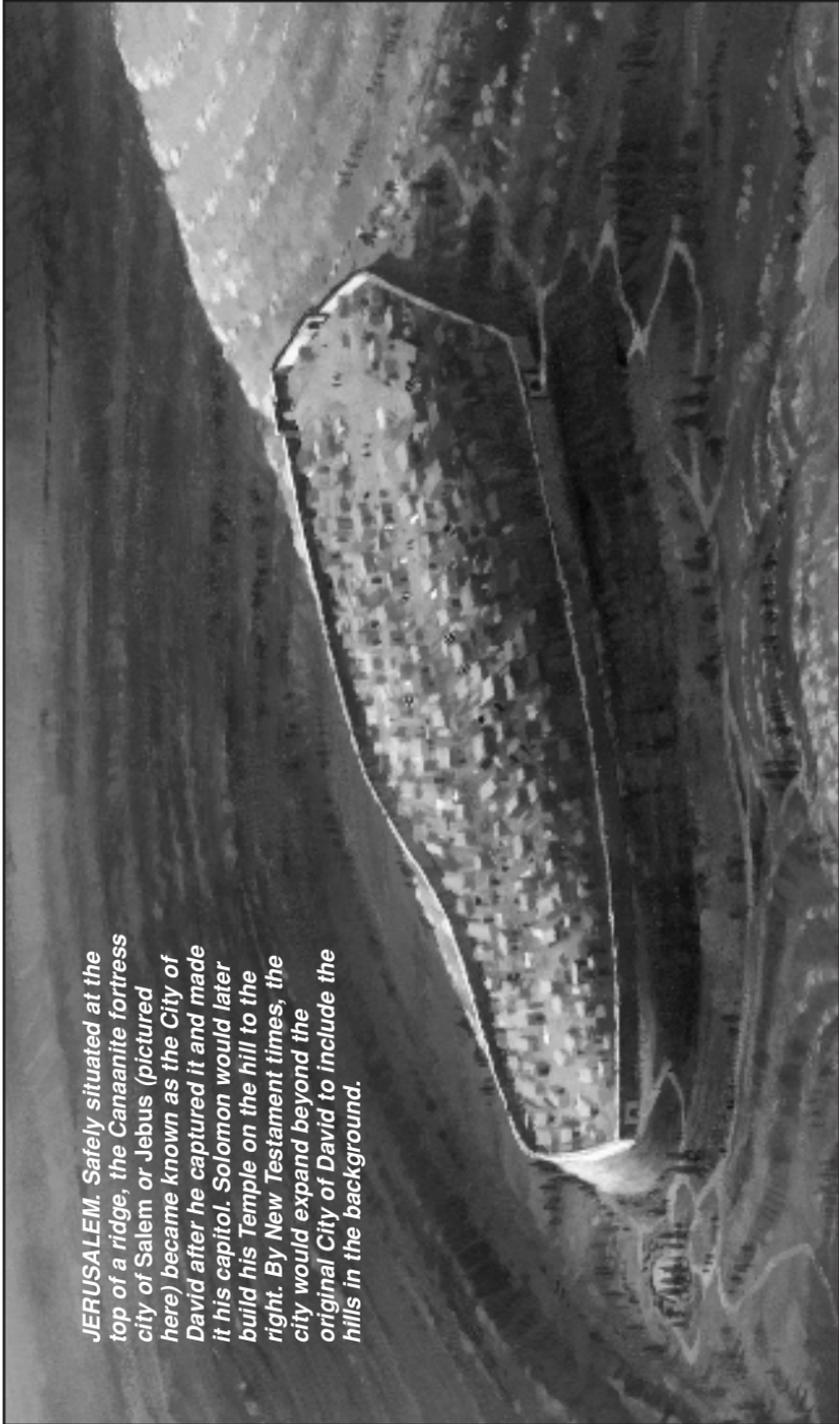
LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

JERUSALEM. Safely situated at the top of a ridge, the Canaanite fortress city of Salem or Jebus (pictured here) became known as the City of David after he captured it and made it his capitol. Solomon would later build his Temple on the hill to the right. By New Testament times, the city would expand beyond the original City of David to include the hills in the background.



The City of God

DAY 18

Psalm 48

Does your hometown have a claim to fame? Are you proud of your hometown or the city where you live?

1. Why is God worthy of praise?
2. What do the geographic references and architectural features tell you about this “city of God”?
3. Where is this Zion? (a) at Jerusalem, (b) in one’s heart and soul, (c) only in heaven, (d) in churches.
4. This psalm asserts that God would make Jerusalem impregnable to any attack and “secure forever” (vs. 3-8). Yet Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the Romans, the people were led off as prisoners, and the city was destroyed. Is this psalm making a false claim? What is the secure fortress where God actually lives?

1. God is pictured here as our eternal “guide” or great Shepherd-King. Do you trust Jesus to guide you and walk with you at work or in business? At school? At home? With your health? With an uncertain future, even to the point of death?
2. Like this psalmist, how do you “hear,” “see,” “meditate” or “consider” what God is doing in your life?

Mount Zion (v. 2)—the city of God—is the “joy of the whole earth” only to those of faith. The community of faith sees Jerusalem as the place where God dwells. This city is both earthly and heavenly, historical and eternal, physical and supernatural at the same time. This song of Zion is one of several (see also Ps 46, 76, 84, 87, 121 and 122).

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word



*“We see that wise people
die, and so do stupid
fools. Then their money
is left for someone else.”*

Psalm 49:10
Contemporary English Version

You Can't Take It With You

DAY 19

Psalm 49

Did anyone teach you how to manage money, or did you have to learn on your own?

1. Do you think the author of this Psalm was rich or poor? Wise or foolish? Blessed or bitter? Why do you think so?
2. What is this psalmist's view concerning end-of-life issues? Who is ultimately helpless? Who is ultimately victorious?
3. What unexpected twist or climax do you see in this description of material things that perish?
4. Rich and poor, wise and foolish, all must face death. So what is the most important thing in life (vs. 12, 15, 20)?

1. Are you impressed by what a rich acquaintance or neighbor has? Let the truths in this psalm help you place things in perspective.

2. No one can pay enough to redeem the life of another (vs. 7-9), although we are inclined to do whatever it takes to extend the life of a loved one. Only Jesus had the ability to redeem a human life—and he has redeemed every human who ever lived and who ever will. All we need to do is accept that redemption.

3. If your checkbook could talk, what would it say you are more concerned about? (a) having it all now, (b) leaving a financial legacy, (c) sacrificing now to ransom the life of another, (d) investing in spiritual things for eternity.

4. Make a list of things that money can't buy. Thank God for them.

*This **wisdom psalm** offers instruction to people rather than worship to God, much as Ecclesiastes does.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

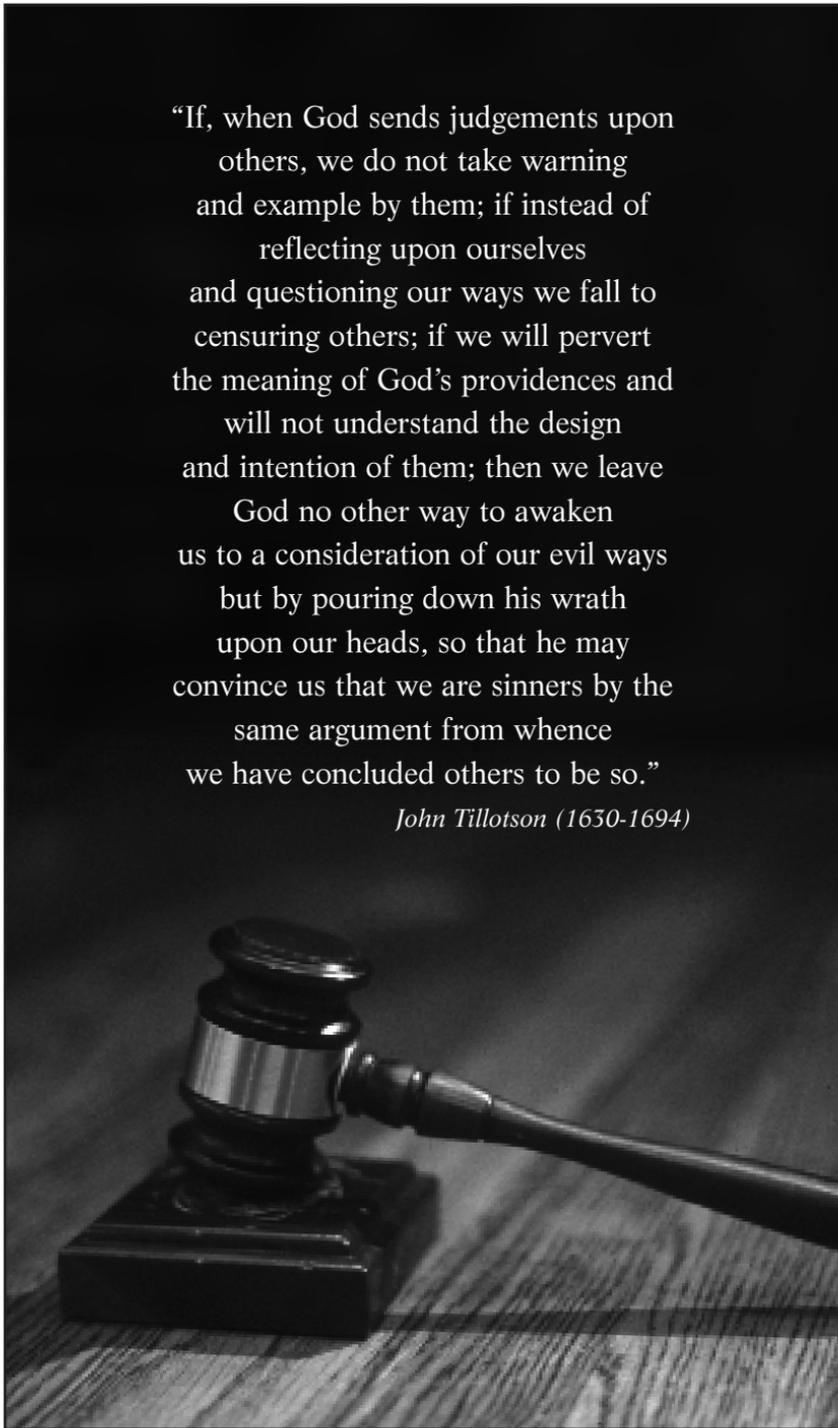
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

“If, when God sends judgements upon others, we do not take warning and example by them; if instead of reflecting upon ourselves and questioning our ways we fall to censuring others; if we will pervert the meaning of God’s providences and will not understand the design and intention of them; then we leave God no other way to awaken us to a consideration of our evil ways but by pouring down his wrath upon our heads, so that he may convince us that we are sinners by the same argument from whence we have concluded others to be so.”

John Tillotson (1630-1694)



Here Comes the Judge

DAY 20

Psalm 50

Have you ever been summoned to appear in court before a judge?

1. What does this psalm say about God the Judge—his jurisdiction, his moral authority, his temperament, his perfect justice (vs. 1-6)?
2. What is this case about? Who is the prosecutor and who are the defendants?
3. What witnesses are brought in? What other evidence for the prosecution is presented? Note the mention of the covenant in verses 5 and 16.
4. What *good-faith* efforts do God's people offer as evidence in their defense (vs. 8-15)? What *bad-faith* efforts are the wicked guilty of making (vs. 16-21)?
5. What is the final verdict in each case?

1. Which do you suppose matters most to God in giving thanks to him? (a) our words, (b) our actions, (c) our motives, (d) our emotions, (e) our traditions, (f) our faith in Jesus Christ.
2. How does Jesus' revelation of the Father in the New Testament radically alter the picture of God this psalm paints?
3. Has Christ done anything for you or your family recently for which you are thankful? What can you offer?

*The scene imagined here is a **theophany**, where the Judge of the universe comes in fiery bombast to Mount Zion, drawing all eyes on him. The original setting for this psalm was probably a ceremony of covenant renewal and remembrance.*

OPENING

up to the Word

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The Truth Comes Out

Psalm 51

OPENING
up to the Word

When do you feel most guilty? (a) when you're not doing your job properly, (b) when your to-do list is not done, (c) when you hurt someone you love, (d) when you fail to perform as expected, (e) when you fail to trust in God.

Do others help make you feel guilty, or can you do that all by yourself?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. For background, read 2 Samuel 11–12. How do you feel the events described in Psalm 51 fit in?

2. How do you think David felt *at the time* of his sin? *When* it was exposed? *After* he wrote this psalm?

3. What response did David seem to expect from God? What assurance did he have that God had wiped the slate clean?

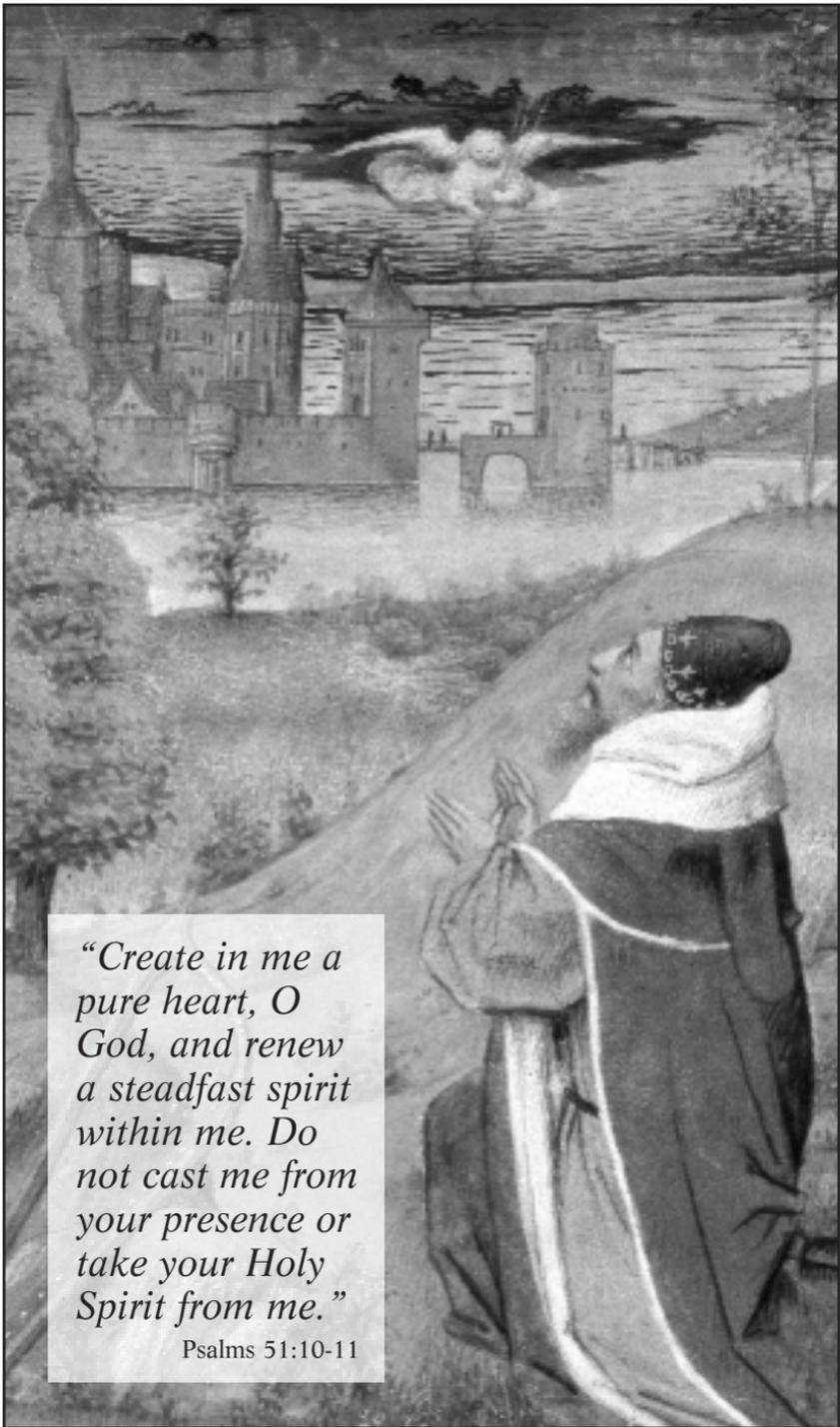
LIVING
out the Word

1. Did any unacknowledged or unconfessed sin of yours come to your attention from reading this psalm? Does such a memory cause you to doubt the final work of Christ on his cross? God's grace does give us spiritual rest and peace, doesn't it?

2. How does the forgiveness of sin and justification to God differ under the old covenant—compared to the new covenant we are given, in Christ's blood?

WINDOW
on the Word

*This famous **penitential psalm of David** draws its superscription from the events of David's life recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12. There we learn the details that lie behind Psalm 51—how David committed adultery with Bathsheba, got her pregnant, murdered her husband Uriah, then tried to cover up his sin.*



*“Create in me a
pure heart, O
God, and renew
a steadfast spirit
within me. Do
not cast me from
your presence or
take your Holy
Spirit from me.”*

Psalms 51:10-11