



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 61-89

Week 3



*“But it is God who
judges: He brings
one down, he exalts
another.”*

Psalm 75:7

Judge Jehovah Rules

DAY 15

Psalms 75

What is your favorite TV show involving a judge?

1. Listen to the voice of the people (v. 1), the voice of God (vs. 2-3) and the voice of the king (vs. 4-10). What is each saying or doing?

2. In judging people, how was this earthly ruler like our heavenly Judge?

3. Who gets wine-like wrath poured out on them, and why (v. 8)? (a) the arrogant, (b) the stiff-necked, (c) Eastern religions, (d) Western ways, (e) the wicked, (f) the earth.

4. “Lifting” your “horns” can be good or bad (vs. 5, 10; see note below). In what way?

1. Do you regularly regard God as the Judge, rendering wise decisions and justice? Or more like a vending machine or butler, dispensing and bringing you whatever you want?

2. For what task ahead could God empower or strengthen your “horns”? When has God had to trim or cut off those horns?

*Unlike Psalm 74, this psalm does not question **why God judges**, but urges us to give thanks (v. 1) for God’s ability to judge and vindicate. The occasion may have been deliverance from the Assyrian invasion (2Ki 18-19; Isa 37), or the enthronement of Israel’s king, ritualized annually (compare Ps 46-48). Because an animal’s **horn** was used as a weapon, horns (vs. 5, 10) came to symbolize strength and power, human or divine (see Ps 18:2).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Don't Mess With God

Psalm 76

OPENING
up to the Word

What action hero of yours—male or female, real or legendary—commands such respect or inspires such fear that no one dares mess with him or her?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How is God pictured here (vs. 3-7)? (a) as king of the jungle, (b) a warrior with bigger weapons, (c) a judge to be revered, (d) a merciful angel, (e) a national hero.
2. Who does God judge (vs. 8-9)? How and why?
3. Who does God save? How and why?
4. What vows or promises does God want his people to keep (v. 11)?

LIVING
out the Word

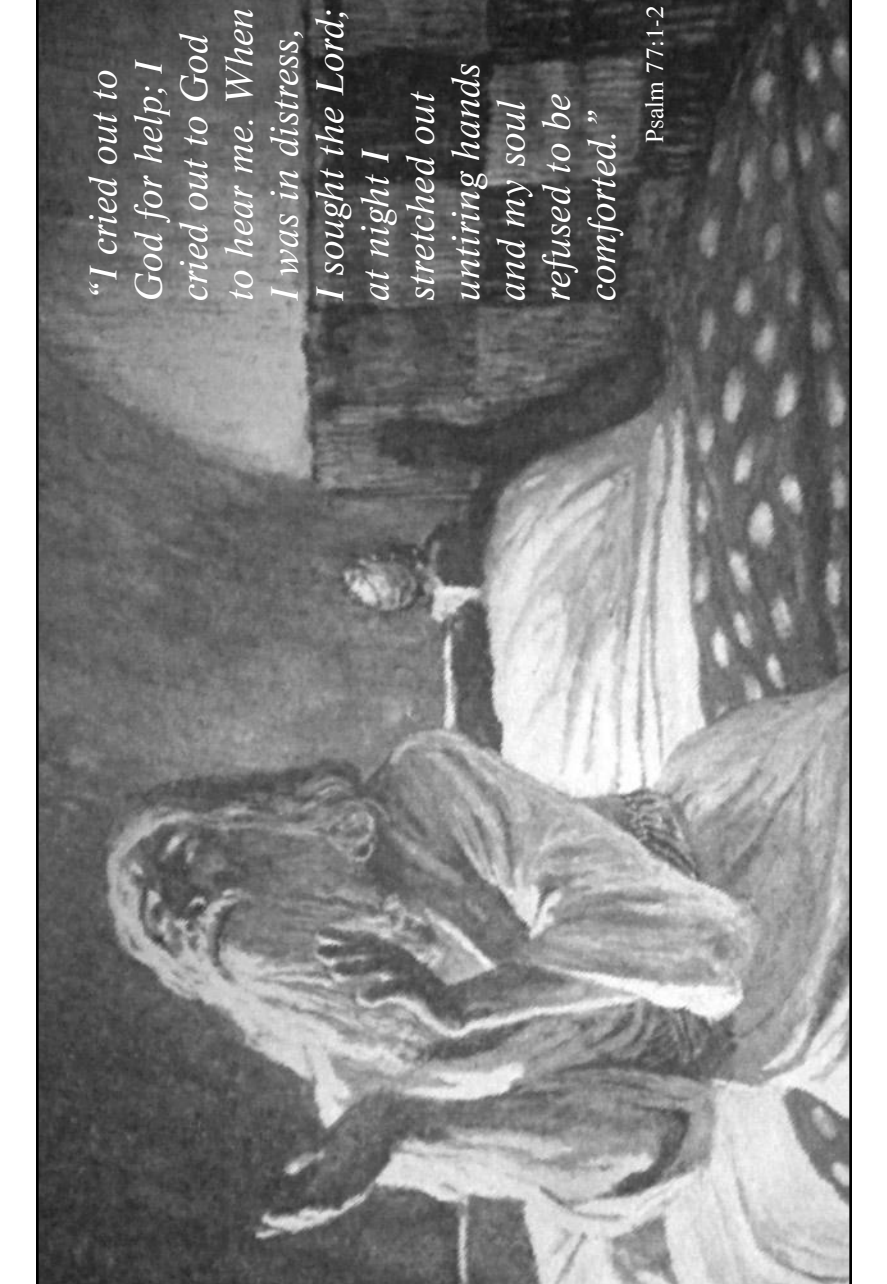
1. How is God your warrior in battle? (a) he keeps you from danger, (b) rescues you from sin, (c) helps you heal after the battle, (d) guides you.
2. Have you ever felt God's anger directed at you?

WINDOW
on the Word

We may envision one of two scenarios for this psalm, as in Psalm 75 (see "Window on the Word" there). Do you believe in a God of wrath? In relation to Psalm 76, what do you think of this observation by John Tillotson (1630-1694): "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."

*“You are resplendent with light,
more majestic than mountains
rich with game.”*

Psalm 76:4



*“I cried out to
God for help; I
cried out to God
to hear me. When
I was in distress,
I sought the Lord;
at night I
stretched out
untiring hands
and my soul
refused to be
comforted.”*

Psalms 77:1-2

The Good Ol' Days

DAY 17

Psalm 77

What, for you, is a really *good time*? How many years back would you consider “the good ol’ days”?

1. What was Asaph’s mood here (v. 1-2)? What general symptoms was he suffering from? What could have been the root of his problem?
2. What “good ol’ days,” heroes of the faith, or special works of God did Asaph recall (vs. 10-20)? Where do you see thoughts of the Exodus? The Red Sea? Mount Sinai? The seven years of famine under Joseph? Creation and the Flood?
3. Why should we discuss God’s mighty deeds so much (vs. 13-15)? (a) as a pep talk, (b) to butter up God with compliments, (c) it’s like whistling in the dark—it encourages us.

1. What truths about God are revealed here (v. 11)? (a) God helps in ages past but today we help ourselves, (b) God rejects or delays only for a time, (c) God is mysterious without any pattern or predictable nature, (d) God does not change—he is faithful.

2. How has God come through for you in “ages past”? What past event gives you hope for the future?

3. When comforting someone else who is depressed or feeling hopeless, would this psalm help?

*Without specific reference to war, peril, famine, disease or any such hardship, it is difficult to identify why this psalmist (individual or communal) is depressed. **Depression** does not always have an identifiable “cause.” One consolation for depression, and one historical basis for hope, is to remember, meditate on or consider all the acts of God in the past (vs. 10-12).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

When Will We Ever Learn?

Psalm 78

OPENING
up to the Word

Who's the best story-teller in your family? What often-told "tell-all" story captures your family history? What's the big moral of that story, if any, for future generations?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What famous Bible stories are mentioned in this psalm? What's the general pattern here? (a) divine miracles, (b) short memories, (c) hard times don't last, (d) obedience of faith, (e) consequences of rebellion, (f) Father knows best.

2. What role did Israel give God (vs. 32-39)? What "game" do you see Israel playing with God? How would you stop this game-playing?

3. Note that four of God's great acts are mentioned twice: (1) saving people (vs. 12-14; 43-53), (2) meeting needs (vs. 15-16; 54-55), (3) dispensing judgment (vs. 17-33; 56-64) and (4) showing mercy (vs. 34-39; 65-72). What examples can you find in this psalm of each act of God?

4. What was the psalmist building up to—the main lesson in this "history repeats itself" list (vs. 9-13)?

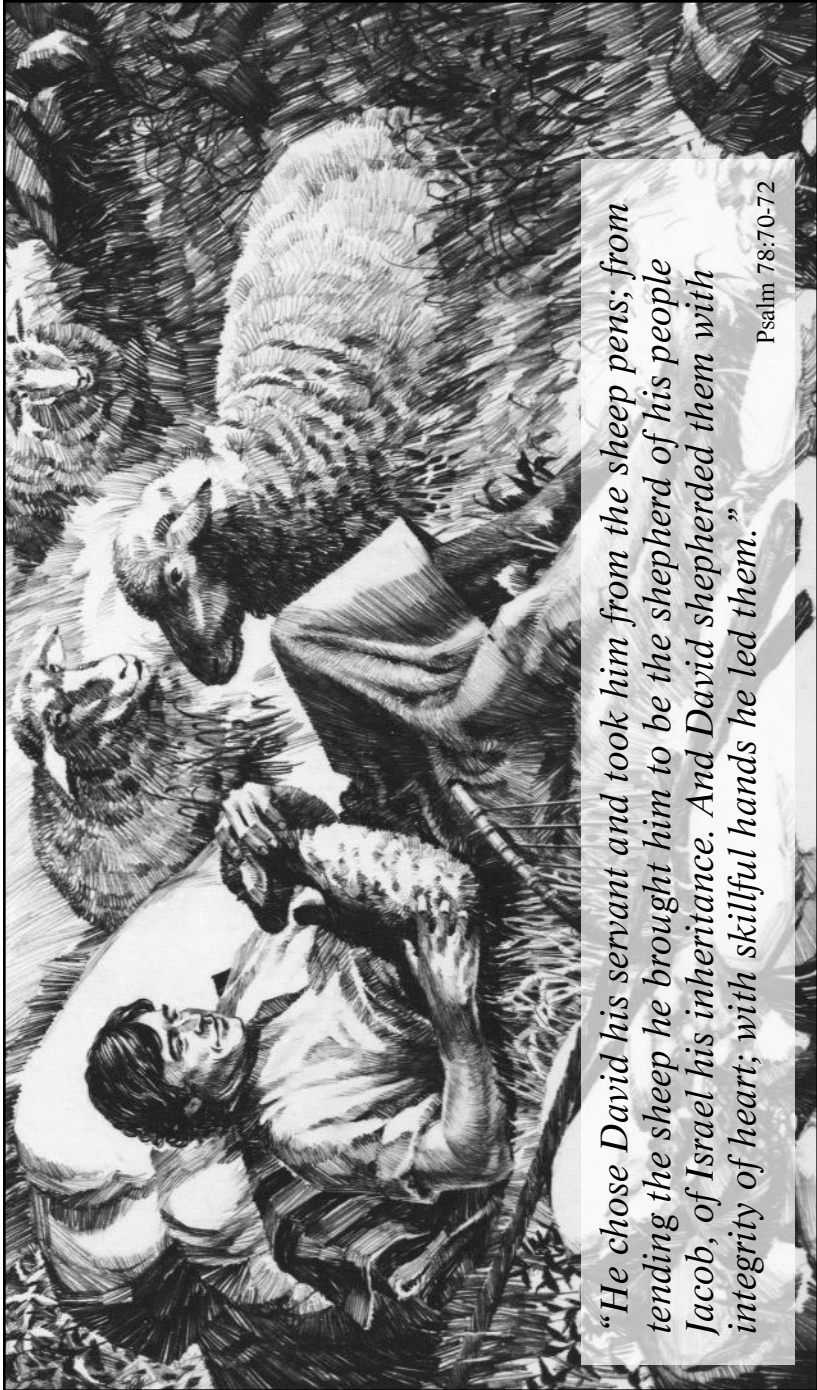
LIVING
out the Word

1. Which of these four history lessons of Israel (noted above) have you learned well? Which spiritual truth do you still need to apply? Which lesson must you relearn often because you are absent-minded?

2. What teaching methods did your parents use most often with you? For teaching moral values to your children, which methods or stories would you use?

WINDOW
on the Word

*This is one of **four great national hymns** of Israel (also Ps 105, 106, 136). The psalmist claimed to know what would keep God's people from repeating past misfortunes and reversals (compare 1Co 10:1-11).*



“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.”

Psalms 78:70-72

Why Pick on Me?

Psalm 79

OPENING
up to the Word

If your house were on fire, and you had time to rescue just three items (beside family members and pets), what three items would you choose?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What caused Jerusalem to be destroyed (v. 8)? Was God at fault?

2. What's wrong with this picture? (a) the bad guys win, (b) evil nations are better off than Israel, (c) God is punishing Israel for sins of the previous generation, (d) God looks weak to the surrounding nations.

3. How do God's people see themselves here (v. 13)? (a) God's servants, (b) saints, (c) victims, (d) innocent, (e) hopeless, (f) ridiculed, (g) sheep.

4. By contrast, how do their neighbors see Israel (v. 4)?

5. By further contrast, how does God see these people (v. 5)? What is he likely to do in response to their prayers and promise (read between the lines).

LIVING
out the Word

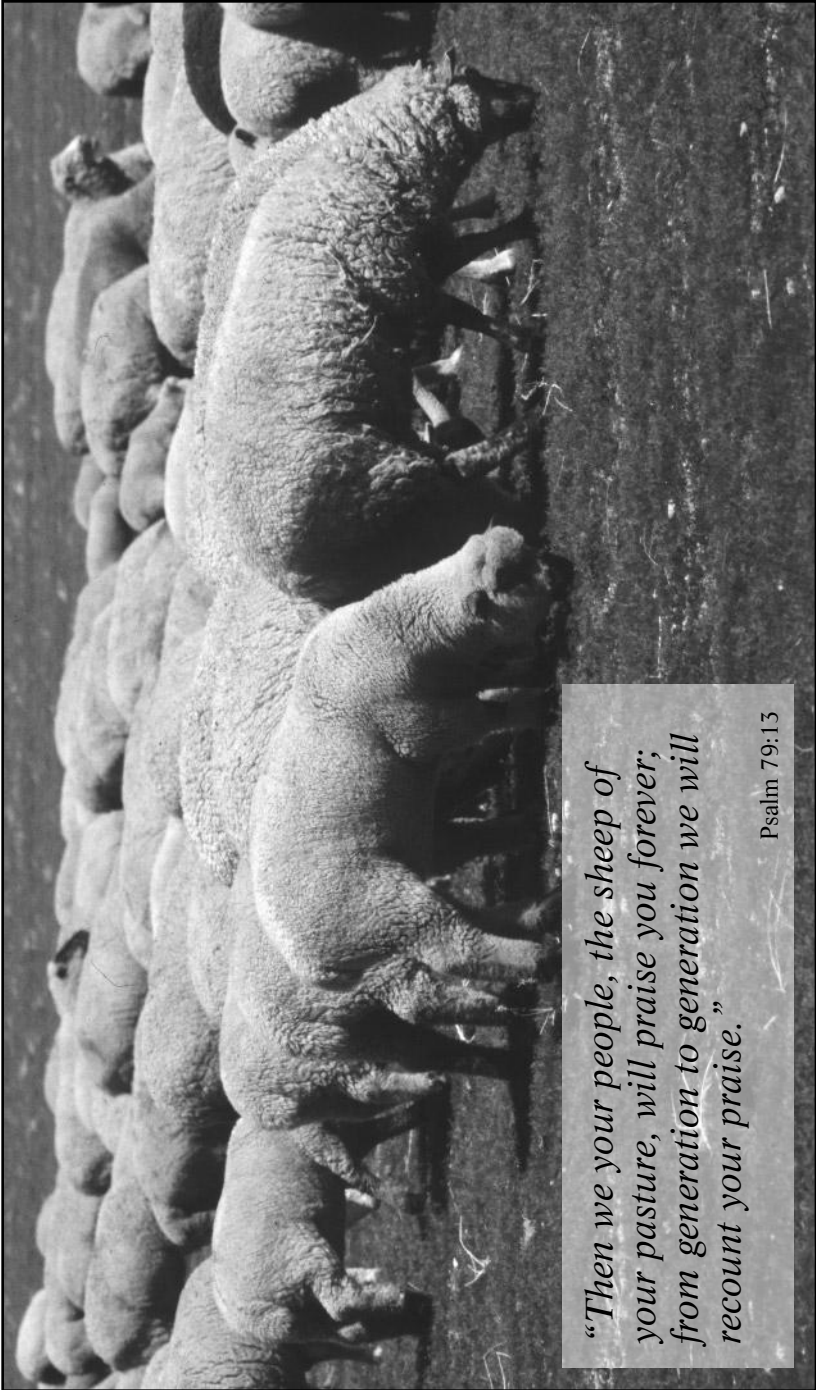
1. Are you asking, "Where is God?" or "How long?" How do you account for "delays" in God's timetable?

2. What is God's approach to punishing nations today? (a) God punishes the bad and blesses the good, (b) God doesn't get involved in politics, (c) history reveals God's hand, (d) God is involved, but no pattern is evident.

3. Are you still trying to justify yourself for an unfair punishment you received?

WINDOW
on the Word

This companion piece to Psalm 74 may be divided into three parts: the plight (vs. 1-4), the prayers (vs. 5-12) and the promise (v. 13) of God's people as they are exiled to Babylon.



*“Then we your people, the sheep of
your pasture, will praise you forever;
from generation to generation we will
recount your praise.”*

Psalm 79:13

“Wake Up, God— Restore Us”

Psalm 80

OPENING
up to the Word

What landmarks (trees, walls, schools, neighboring fields, etc.), once near your grandparents' home, are no longer there?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why did the psalmist feel lost here (vs. 3-4)? (a) God had forgotten Israel, (b) Israel had forgotten God, (c) other countries hated Israel, (d) there was no safety in Israel, (e) favor with God was no longer assured.
 2. What did he want from God (v. 1)? What refrain or appeal is repeated most often (vs. 3, 7, 19)? On what basis did he make his appeal?
 3. Judging from this psalm, what is God's job? (a) guiding nations, (b) providing food and drink, (c) protecting against enemies, (d) maintaining certain spiritual laws, (e) saving people.
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. Asaph asked God to revive and restore God's people. From what “bowl of tears” (v. 5) do you or your family need to be revived or restored?
 2. What three images in this psalm did Jesus apply to himself (see Jn 10:11; 15:1; 17:1)? In relation to Jesus, what images apply to you?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

*Joseph... Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh (vs. 1-2) each depicts the **northern kingdom of Israel**, faced with the reality of exile.*

What if God Had Voice Mail?

Most of us have learned to live with answering machines and voice mail as a necessary part of modern life. But you may have wondered, what if God decided to install voice mail?

Imagine praying and hearing this:

“Thank you for calling Heaven. Please select one of the following options:

Press 1 for GENERAL REQUESTS

Press 2 for THANKSGIVING

Press 3 for COMPLAINTS

Press 4 for HEALING

Press 5 for HELP WITH THE IRS

Press 6 for RAIN

Press 7 for “MIRACLES”

Press 8 for WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

Press 9 for ALL OTHER INQUIRIES

Press 0 to hear this menu again.”

Which option is your usual one?

What if God used the familiar excuse, “I’m sorry, all the angels are helping other sinners right now. Please stay on the line. Your call is important to us and will be answered in the order in which it was received.” Could you stand the delay, or would you hang up?

What if some angel then came on line to say, “Our computers show that you have already called once today. Please hang up and try tomorrow.”

Have you ever felt this way?

Celebration at Honey Rock

Psalm 81

OPENING
up to the Word

If a banquet were thrown in your honor, what special dish would you request? What dessert? What beverage?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. This psalm calls for celebration, but quickly turns somber. Why (vs. 11-12)?

2. With God doing so many miracles, why did the Israelites keep turning from him (v. 12)? (a) seen one—seen ‘em all, (b) miracles only increase the hunger for more, (c) competition with other gods, (d) they had trouble trusting that he would always be there for them.

3. What expectations, rewards and consequences does God place on his people (vs. 13-16)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. From what “distress” or “test” has God rescued or answered you?

2. When God speaks, do you listen? Illustrate.

3. Is God having you eat humble pie, or “honey from the rock”?

WINDOW
on the Word

*This **harvest festival song**, with its Exodus motif, is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles. Honey from the rock (v. 16; see Dt 32:13-14) indicates that God has even more grace than what he has given so far.*