



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 90-119

Week 3

All Creatures Great and Small

Psalm 104

OPENING
up to the Word

Do any pet names get applied to people in your household? Are you more like the animals, or are your pets more like their owners?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Look at this psalm as a job description of the Creator. Is this Creator more of an artist, or a scientist? Does the job call for planning ahead, or creating as you go? Is the job concerned with tiny details, or big projects only? Is it more important that the created world *look* right, or that it *work* right? What aspect of the created world gets extra attention? What aspect yields the greater joy?
2. The psalmist paints beautiful pictures to praise the creative power of God. Which word pictures or poetic images seem most vivid or unusual to you, and why? What's the point behind the poetry?
3. Can you hear all God's creatures singing in the choir in the psalm? How so?
4. Where do you see equality between man and beast (vs. 19-23, 27-30; see note)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Does human engineering improve, or destroy, God's intelligent design? In what way?
2. The psalmist is thrilled with God's good world, and plans on praising him for it forever (vs. 31-35). How can you imitate the psalmist in giving thanks to the Lord?

WINDOW
on the Word

*As with Psalm 8, this psalm extols **God as Creator** and is closely linked with the Genesis account of creation. Psalm 104 pictures creatures, human and animal, as equal in God's creation, able to feed themselves, but continuously sustained by God's open hand (v. 28). Sir Robert Grant's "O Worship the King" is based on Psalm 104.*

Hymn That Hypes His-Story

DAY 16

Psalms 105

What story comes to mind when you see a photo of a family patriarch or matriarch on the wall?

1. From this psalm, how would you describe Israel's history? (a) miraculous, (b) exciting, (c) scary, (d) ancient, (e) full of heroic characters, (f) full of God's grace.
2. What events come to mind when the narrator invokes the memory of Abraham (vs. 5-15)? Joseph (vs. 16-22)? Jacob (vs. 23-25)? Moses (vs. 26-41)?
3. What verbs indicate God as the subject? What verbs indicate man as the subject? What does that tell you about the covenant with Abraham?
4. Since God created and sustains the world with such intelligent design and sovereign care (see Ps 104), how do you account for the natural disasters and other chaotic events described here (105:28-36)?

1. Ancient Israelites wrote hymns to preserve and propagate their rich history for generations to come. What is the equivalent method or literary device in your culture that God's people use to tell their story?
2. Knowing how God has worked in the past, how will that help you live in the present and prepare for the future?
3. Despite their struggles, the history of Israel is one of promise and blessing (vs. 37-45)—from Abraham to the promised land of Canaan. How does God's pattern of promise and blessing extend to us, the spiritual children of Abraham (see Ro 4)?

*Along with Psalms 78, 106, and 136, this hymn of praise rehearses the great acts of God in fulfillment of his **covenant with Abraham** (vs. 8-11, 42-45). This psalm extols God's initiative and grace, which is effective apart from any human response.*

OPENING

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Ugly as Sin

Psalm 106

OPENING
up to the Word

What do you envision when something is said to be as *ugly as sin*?

DIGGING
into the Word

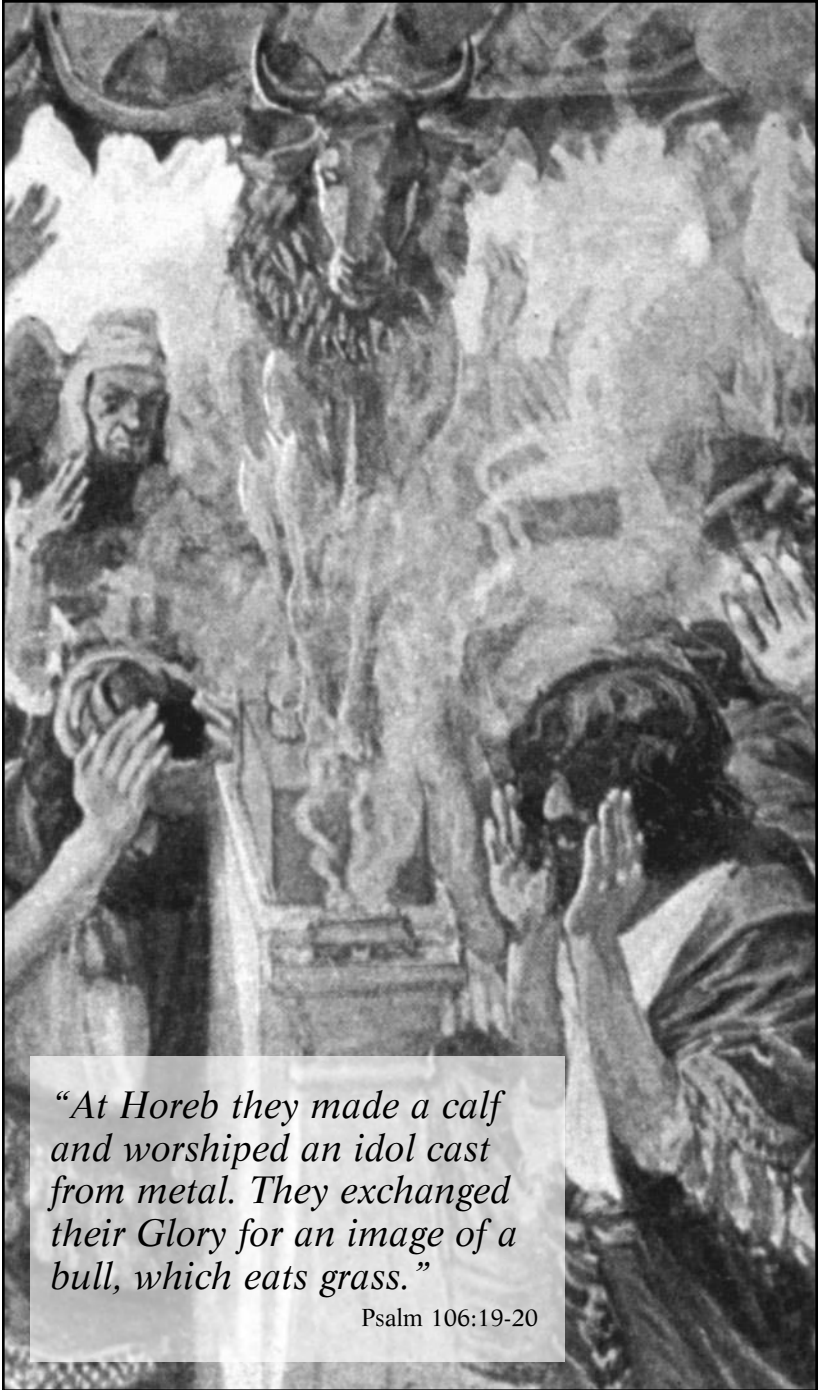
1. What was Israel rebelling against? (a) God's provisions were insufficient, (b) God's discipline was harsh, (c) other.
 2. After reflecting on God's goodness (vs. 1-5), the psalmist confesses Israel's sins. At least eight examples of sin are cited here. How many can you find during the exodus from Egypt (vs. 7-12)? While wandering in the wilderness (vs. 13-23)? While camping on the Jordan (vs. 24-31)? While dwelling in the Promised Land (vs. 32-46)?
 3. God nonetheless did incredible things for his chosen yet fickle nation. What examples can you find here of God's changeless grace?
 4. Why was it so hard for the wandering Israelites to obey Moses, Aaron and God?
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LIVING
out the Word

1. In what ways are you like the nation of Israel? Where are you experiencing discontent or rebellion? At what juncture are you—exodus from bondage, wandering under discipline, poised for victory, or lax in finishing the race?
 2. To whom would you readily confess wrong? (a) to yourself, (b) to God, (c) to the person you've hurt, (d) to your parents.
 3. God's long-suffering mercy toward the Israelites is meant to instill an attitude of gratitude and obedience. As you learn of God's ways with wayward Israel, what does that do for you?
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WINDOW
on the Word

Covenant faithfulness means not only the deserved punishment that follows whenever we have sinned (Ps 106:6), but also delivering the promised blessing that originates from grace (see Ps 105).



*“At Horeb they made a calf
and worshiped an idol cast
from metal. They exchanged
their Glory for an image of a
bull, which eats grass.”*

Psalm 106:19-20

Reversal of Fortune

Psalm 107

OPENING
up to the Word

Does your family have a reversal-of-fortune story somewhere in its long history—either rags-to-riches or glory-to-gutter?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. The psalmist declares, “let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds” (vs. 8, 15, 21-22, 31; compare v. 43). What groups are invited to give thanks, and why?

2. Who are “the redeemed of the Lord” (vs. 2-3)? (a) Israelites from the wilderness and the exile, (b) religious fanatics, (c) all members of God’s family, (d) count me in!

3. The kinds of distress suffered by the children of Israel are symbolic of much broader applicability. Recall each symbolic distress—wanderers (vs. 4-9), prisoners (vs. 10-16), sin-sick souls (vs. 17-22), perils at sea (vs. 23-32). What distress does each symbol point to?

4. From these word pictures, would you say the Israelites’ troubles were of their own choosing? Or do they have someone else to blame? Did their awful experiences provide an opportunity for Israel to grow strong as the people of God?

5. In each difficulty—whether lost (vs. 4-9), imprisoned (vs. 10-16), sick (vs. 17-22), drowning (vs. 23-32), or whatever (vs. 33-43)—God rescued his people. Does this mean that in every tough circumstance we face, God will rescue us if we call on him for help? Why or why not?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What wonderful deed has God done for you most recently? How did you thank him?

2. No matter how bad your situation is, what happy ending can you always count on, according to this psalm?

WINDOW
on the Word

Look for the **four-part cycle** (calamity—cry—salvation—thanksgiving) for each stanza.

Testimonies of the *Lord's* *Deliverance*

Each group of people who shared their testimony in Psalm 107 cried to the Lord, and God met them exactly where they were. For the people who were restless and wandering, God led them on the straight and narrow path (vs. 4-9). For the people in chains, God delivered them from bondage (vs. 10-16). For people living in darkness, God turned on the light (vs. 17-22). For people on the storm-tossed sea, God stilled the storm (vs. 23-32).

“Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord” (v. 43). Thus the psalmist leads us back to where he started—the steadfast love of the Lord—which “endures forever” (v. 1).

How shall we then live? Whatever the need, the response and result are the same—you cry out to the Lord and he will meet you where you are. That should give us confidence in everything we do. That should encourage us to attempt great things for him.

My God Can Beat Up Your God

Psalm 108

OPENING
up to the Word

Has anyone ever told you that their church was “the only true” church?

DIGGING
into the Word

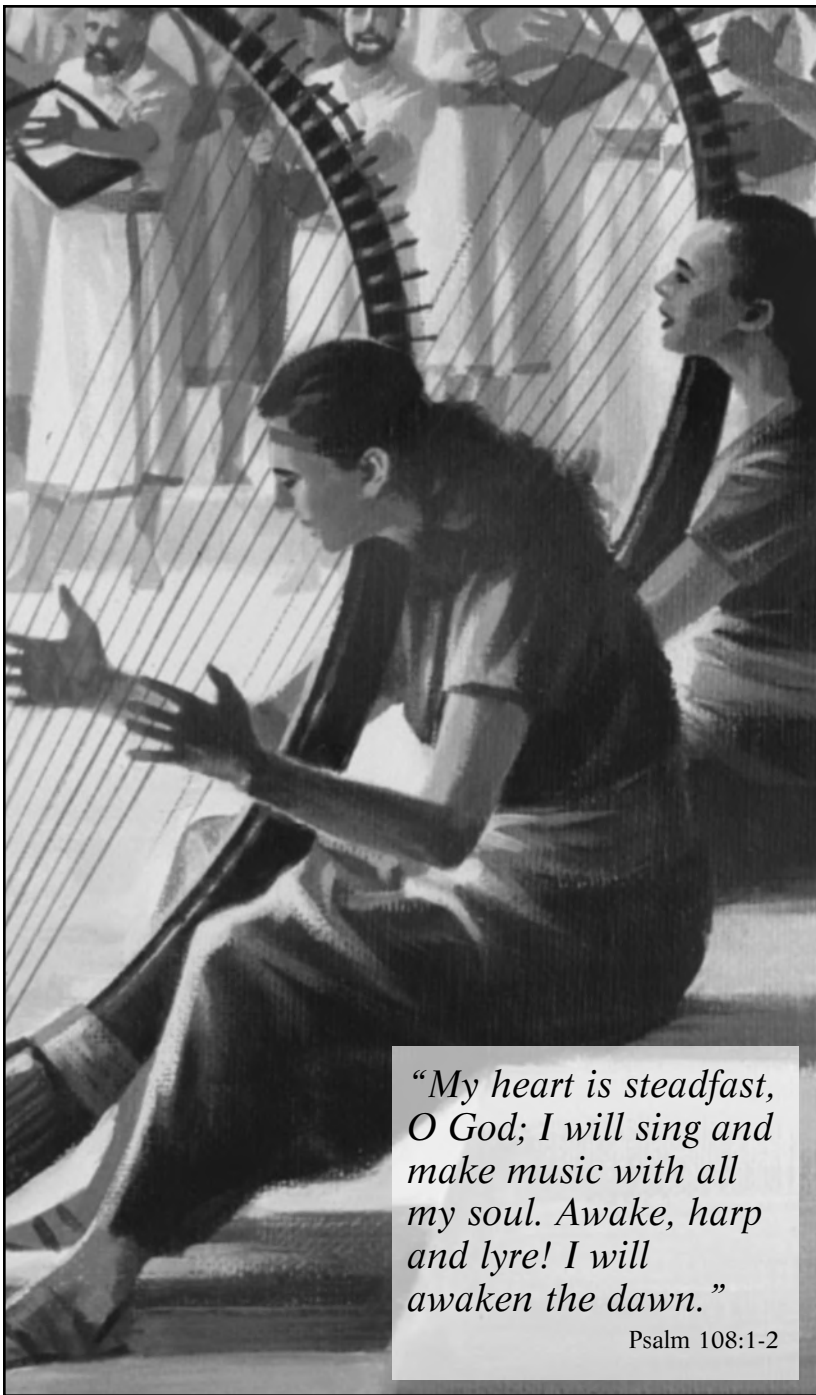
1. The psalmist praises God in an anthem of victory (vs. 1-5). Why is he so confident in God?
2. Can you locate on a Bible map any of these spheres under God’s providence? What is the point of God covering this geographic spread?
3. Is there anything that could shake the psalmist’s total confidence in God when asking for deliverance (vs. 6-13)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What deliverance are you relying on God for? Any doubts?
2. Consider the tone of this psalm—the writer is not boasting or triumphant, which leads to pride, but rather humble and thankful for God’s blessings.

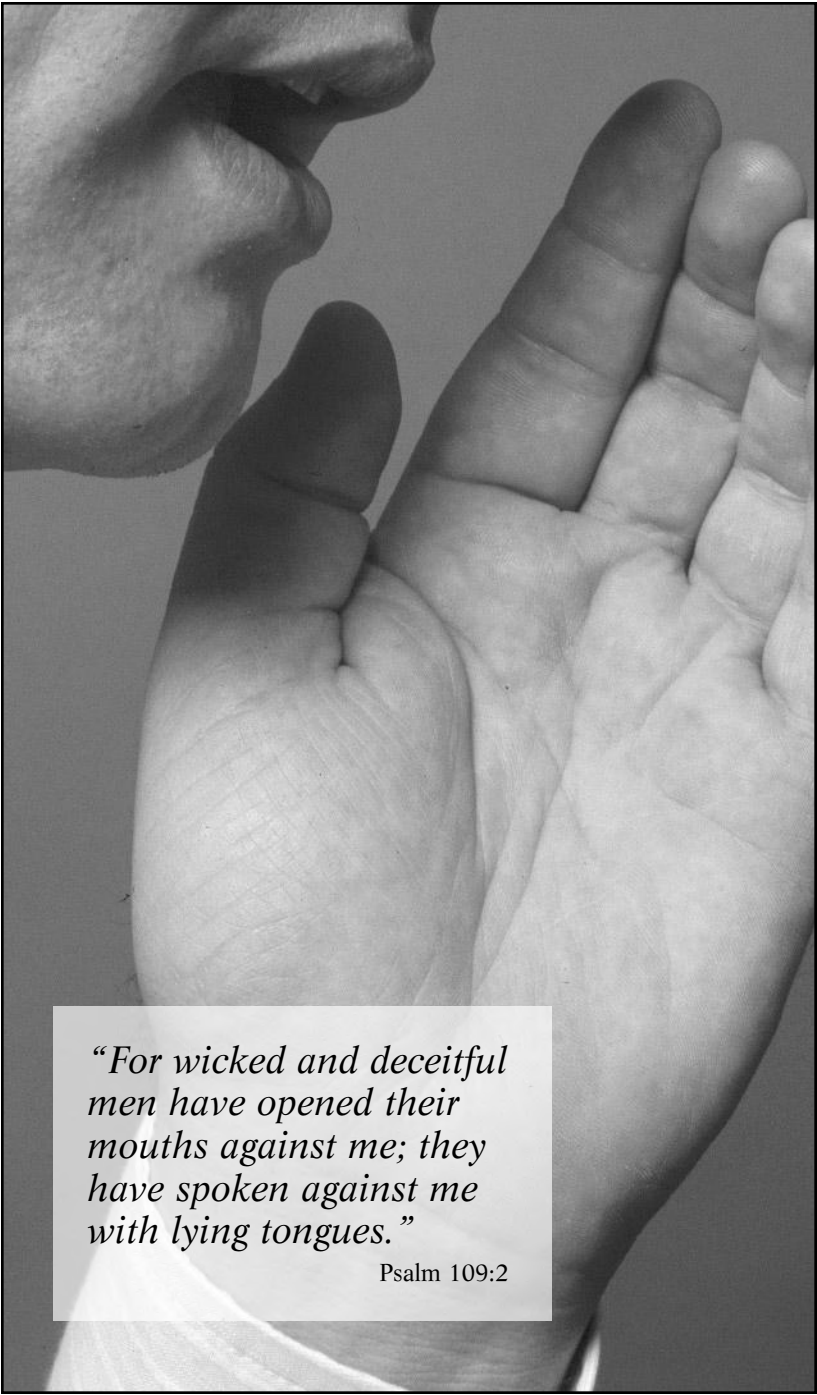
WINDOW
on the Word

In an example of déjà vu, verses 1-5 are repeated from Psalm 57:7-11; likewise, verses 6-13 are found in Psalm 60. Read the superscript that accompanies the titles to Psalm 57 and 60. That may provide a clue to the adverse situation David is facing here in Psalm 108.



*“My heart is steadfast,
O God; I will sing and
make music with all
my soul. Awake, harp
and lyre! I will
awaken the dawn.”*

Psalm 108:1-2



*“For wicked and deceitful
men have opened their
mouths against me; they
have spoken against me
with lying tongues.”*

Psalm 109:2

Curses... Foiled Again!

DAY 20

Psalm 109

Suppose you were to add up the score of all the things done against you by your friends or family, and all you've done to get back at them. Have you paid them all back yet? Are you still trying?

1. The psalmist was victimized by terrible lies, hatred, and deceit (vs. 1-5). Why do you suppose he was so mistreated?
2. What does the psalmist wish would happen to those who hate him (vs. 6-20)?
3. He submits this wish list to the Lord, instead of taking justice into his own hands. Can you imagine anyone you have ever known praying like that?
4. In what ways does sin have a boomerang effect (vs. 9-17)? How can this cycle of sin be broken?
5. The psalmist seems to mellow in verses 21-31. Why is that?

1. What aspect of this psalm is worthy of our emulation? (a) venting anger is okay, (b) it's okay to even the score, (c) praying for justice is enough, (d) revenge is the Lord's—not ours, (e) we are called to turn the other cheek and love our enemies.

2. Do you share the psalmist's confidence (vs. 30-31) that God can help those in need to work out even the most difficult relationships or tough situations? Should you publicly thank God for showing you mercy?

*David suffered many false accusations (1Sa 22:7-13; 2Sa 15:3-4), as did Jesus (Mt 26:59-61; 27:39-44), both of whom could have prayed this prayer. The apostles applied it to Judas the betrayer (v. 8, see Ac 1:20). But the applicability of **imprecatory prayer** is questioned today. Jesus taught us not to curse, but to bless those who persecute us (Mt 5:43-44; Lk 6:27-31). We are to trust in God's handling of the situation—not to tell him what to do.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

At the Right Hand of God

Psalm 110

OPENING
up to the Word

The president of the United States and his wife will dine with you tomorrow at your home. How will you prepare for this? How will you handle all the hoopla of secret service, White House entourage, and media hype?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Study the word pictures in this psalm. What effect would this portrait of a victorious king have had on Israel at the time the Psalter was finally compiled—a time when Israel had no kings.

2. Could this psalm with all its exaggerated language have applied to the Davidic dynasty at any point in time? Why or why not?

3. Many believe this psalm could point only to the true and victorious king-priest—the Messiah. Where in this royal psalm do you see the Messiah pictured: (a) as King? (b) as Priest? (c) as victorious Warrior?

LIVING
out the Word

What effect do these word pictures have on you? (a) increased love and devotion to the Lord, (b) increased fear of God's judgment, (c) increased hope of Christ's return, (d) instilled joy in fulfilling a role in the royal household of God.

WINDOW
on the Word

The NT writers apply this royal coronation psalm to Jesus as "my Lord" (v. 1; compare Mt 22:41-45; Mk 12:35-37; Ac 2:32-35). Christ intercedes for his people as a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek (v. 4; compare Gen 14:18-20; Heb 5-8). Christ's ultimate triumph over evil is prophesied here (vs. 1-2, 5-6).