

# Psalms and Salvation: *The Message Most Overlook!*

*Millions have turned to the Psalms for inspiration and solace. But the Psalms are more than pleasant poetry. The book of Psalms proclaims powerful prophecy!*

By Earl H. Williams

**P**salms stands as one of the Bible's most awesome books! Do you know why?

Certainly, the book's expressions of faith and praises to God have brought comfort and encouragement to people throughout the ages since they were written. But there is much more to this book — a vital message for us today.

This is not a reserved, quiet book designed to rock you to sleep. On the contrary, the Psalms will rock you into reality and awaken you to the earthshaking events of God's master plan for humanity!

The Psalms actually convey a powerful prophetic message, for those who understand. Let's see exactly what this means.

## **The Psalms — your time machine**

King David, a man "after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), wrote many of the Psalms, according to Jesus Christ and His apostles (Luke 20:42, Acts 4:25, Hebrews 4:7). Some of the Psalms, though, date all the way back to the time of Moses (Psalm 90), while others were written decades after David's death, up to the Babylonian captivity, during

the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (Psalm 137). It is commonly believed that Ezra compiled the Psalms and arranged them in their present order.

The Psalms break down into five separate books, Book I comprising Psalms 1-41; Book II, Psalms 42-72; Book III, Psalms 73-89; Book IV, Psalms 90-106; and Book V, Psalms 107-150. The ancient and respected Jewish *Midrash*, a commentary, states: "Moses gave Israel the five books of the Torah [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy], and correspondingly David gave them the five books of the Psalms."

The five books of the law, or Torah, combine with the five books of Psalms to deliver one powerful prophecy — the salvation of mankind!

The Psalms portray people in prophecy. The past human trials and triumphs of David and other personalities were prophetic, and transform Psalms into powerful prophecy for our day and the great future beyond.

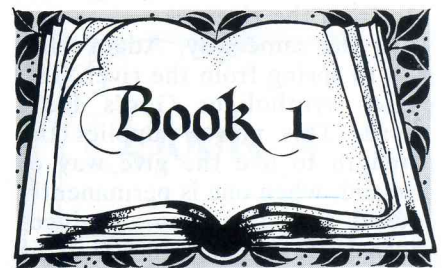
Step into your time machine, the book of Psalms, and travel with me through time and space from the world today to the world tomorrow and beyond. See the past, present and future — all in the book of Psalms.

Set the time dial to the past by

turning to Book I of Psalms. The success of our voyage into the future, after all, depends on our comprehension of and response to the past. Turn the dial all the way to the beginning of man's time on earth.

Ready? OK, hit the start button, and here we go. Events, people and places flash past us in a dizzying kaleidoscope of sight and sound. Thousands of years pass in minutes as we plunge into the past. Suddenly, we halt. Ah, the Garden of Eden blossoms before us.

Here we stand witness to the experiences of Adam and Eve, the first humans. Their decision determined the future course of humanity's history!



## **The beginning**

In the book of beginnings called *Genesis*, God records that He presented two ways of life to Adam and Eve in the form of two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Illustrations by Joan Gryfness

(Genesis 2:9). Those two ways were the way of give and the way of get, the way of life and the way of death. The reaction of Adam and Eve to God's instruction would affect them and their children for the next 6,000 years.

The book of Psalms echoes the message of the two ways. The prophet David also transports us to the issues revealed in the Garden of Eden when he writes: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . his delight is in the law of the Lord [the tree of life, the give way]" (Psalms 1:1-2).

What happens when a person follows the give way? "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (verse 3).

The first psalm of the first of the five books in Psalms explodes with meaning. The tree referred to here is the tree of life. God intended for humans to eat of that tree by living the give way. Had Adam and Eve done so, they would have bloomed and grown to be like that tree — for we are what we eat. God's tree, God's way, is giving, for "God is love" (I John 4:8). Humanity's destiny is to be born as God's literal children!

For more information, write for our free full-length book *The Incredible Human Potential*.

The river in Psalms is the same river in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10). The tree gets its life from the river.

In the same way, Adam's life was to spring from the river. The water symbolizes God's Holy Spirit. This power supplies the strength to live the give way of life and, when one is permanently locked into that way, produces eternal life (John 7:38-39). This water is the true fountain of youth. Adam's "leaf" did not have to "wither" (Psalms 1:3).

On the other hand, Psalms shows the tragic consequences of the get way. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil produces calamity: "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff

which the wind drives away. . . . For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (verses 4, 6). In complete disappointment, we watch Adam and Eve choose the get way. Sadly, we watch them wither and become, just as the psalm says, dust in the wind. God warned them: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Adam's children rush headlong into the way of get and into the inescapable consequences of that way: destruction and misery (Psalms 2:1-5).

But is this the end? No! A new beginning, a new hope, rises from the dust: Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul elsewhere proclaims the good news: "'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. . . . The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven" (I Corinthians 15:45, 47).

Anxious for the coming of our Lord as Savior, let us speed forward 4,000 years. Suddenly, we find ourselves in Judea, the site where Jesus Christ fulfilled a special mission in His first coming to earth.

David testified what had been said long before in heaven: "The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'" (Psalms 2:7). Those words were fulfilled at the beginning of New Testament times (Matthew 3:17, Acts 13:33).

We watch Jesus grow into manhood and fulfill His destiny. His innermost feelings at what is called the Last Supper were expressed by David: "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9, John 13:18).

After the betrayal, Jesus' enemies took Him before the chief priest and the council. We hear the people hurling lies and false accusations at Jesus. The psalmist says: "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not" (Psalms 35:11, Authorized Version).

Then the Romans scourge

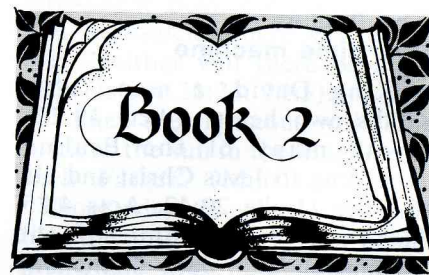
Jesus with a cat-o'-nine-tails. We cringe as the metal and bone tear into Jesus' back. His flesh is stripped away so horribly that, says the psalmist, prophetically, "I can count all My bones" (Psalms 22:17).

Hanging from the crucifixion stake, Jesus hears the crowds clamor against Him. The psalmist writes: "All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!'" (verses 7-8, Luke 23:35).

With our sins weighing heavily upon Him, Jesus cries: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?" (Psalms 22:1, Matthew 27:46). Through deep mental and physical anguish, Jesus Christ endures, driven by two pervading thoughts: His resurrection and our salvation. Of His resurrection, Jesus says, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10, Acts 2:27).

What will be the end result of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection? Psalm 22:27 tells us, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You."

What a beginning for humanity — what an act of love! The first book of Psalms powerfully portrays the love of God — the beginning of salvation. These Psalms combine with Genesis to proclaim the beginning of God's plan for man.



## The Church

With the hope of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ, let us boldly and confidently move forward in time. Set the time dial to the present, the age of God's Church, by turning to Book II of Psalms (chapters 42-72).

As we travel through nearly 2,000 years of Church history, God calls His people (John 6:44). God leads these people to repentance, His ministers baptize them and the Father begets them with His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). With the power of the Holy Spirit, God's people overcome themselves, Satan and the world, qualifying for the coming Kingdom of God.

Book II of Psalms highlights God's relationship with His Church. Exodus, the second book of the law, parallels Book II of Psalms in its Church theme. In Exodus God calls His Church (ancient Israel) and leads them. *Exodus* actually means "going out from." God called Israel out of Egypt just as He calls Christians out of this worldly society.

God even baptized the Israelites in the Red Sea. Paul writes, "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians 10:2).

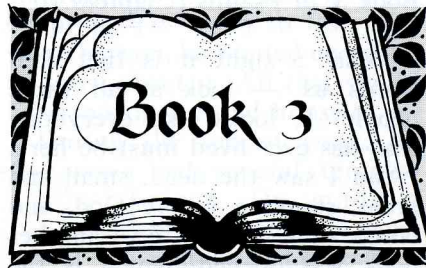
Israel's potential was incredible: "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Does that potential sound familiar? Compare I Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 5:10.

In Psalms, David portrays the theme of the Church from a personal perspective. He captures the feelings and thoughts of Christians in every age. David yearns for God's calling and truth: "Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!" (Psalms 43:3). The psalmist desires to be in God's Church: "Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle" (verse 3).

Repentance and begetting with the Holy Spirit characterize every truly converted person. David deeply repented of his sins. But David, like you and I, knew that he needed the power of God's Spirit to successfully overcome sin. Read his prayer: "Create in

me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:10-11).

The writer of Psalms looks to Jesus Christ as the foundation of the Church: "Be my strong habitation . . . for You are my rock and my fortress" (Psalms 71:3). Jesus Christ told Peter, "And on this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the Church stands (I Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 2:20).



### The Great Tribulation

Perhaps you found the beginning of God's plan revealing, and the Church age seemed interesting. But you want to know about the future, right? Hop back into your time machine. Buckle up. It's going to be a rough ride. Set the time dial to the end of the age, by turning to Book III of Psalms (chapters 73-89).

The theme of Book III of Psalms reeks of destruction. As we zoom into the future, our bodies tremble and our hearts quiver at the disease and famine afflicting our homelands, people we know. The flashing light of nuclear mushroom clouds blinds our eyes.

This section of Psalms was mostly written by Levitical priests. It parallels the book of Leviticus in the law.

In Leviticus are prophecies of the coming destruction of Israel in the Great Tribulation. For this nation's disobedience and rebellion, God prophesies: "I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you . . . I will break the pride of your power . . . I will lay your cities waste . . . You shall eat the flesh of your sons,

and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters" (Leviticus 26:16, 19, 31, 29).

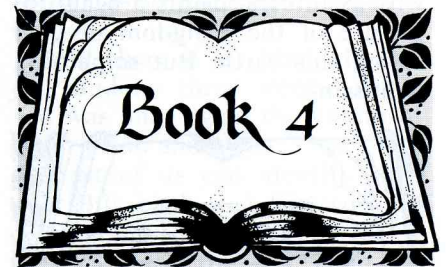
The psalmist also sees the coming destruction of our society: "Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors" (Psalms 73:18-19).

Jerusalem and the Temple weep and wail in desolation. The priest Asaph cries: "O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps" (Psalms 79:1, Matthew 24:15).

Some of the saints are martyred: "The dead bodies of Your servants they have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth" (Ps. 79:2).

The psalmist cries in desperation as destruction threatens all humanity: "Remember how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men? What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?" (Psalms 89:47-48). Will man survive this darkest, most horrible period of human history?

Book III of Psalms, with the prophecies of Leviticus, deliver a dirge of death and destruction. Darkness and dreariness characterize our travel into the future — but a wonderful light follows the darkness.



### God's Kingdom

Let's get out of here! Quickly, set the time dial to the year "1 K.G." (first year of the Kingdom of God) by turning to Book IV of Psalms (chapters 90-106).

As we jet from the darkness of

the Great Tribulation, we catch on the horizon the first glimpse of light. It's the dawning of the glorious Kingdom of God.

The book of Numbers in the law parallels Book IV of Psalms. They tell the story of the peaceful, prosperous reign of God's Kingdom on earth.

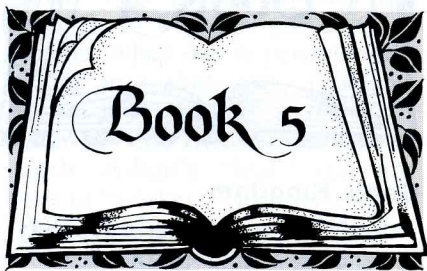
Numbers records Israel's journey through the wilderness, dwelling in tabernacles (temporary dwellings). In connection with keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, God commanded, "You shall dwell in booths for seven days" (Leviticus 23:42). Living in temporary dwellings teaches us that our physical bodies are temporary; we should seek eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Moses, who led physical Israel to the physical type of God's Kingdom, the promised land, tells about our eternal dwelling place: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place [tabernacle] in all generations" (Psalms 90:1). How long shall this age of the Kingdom last? "For a thousand years" (verse 4).

We see the whole world rejoicing at the rulership of God: "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad!" (Psalms 97:1).

Now God sets His hand, for the first time, to save the whole world: "The Lord has made known His salvation . . . all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalms 98:2-3).

Book IV of Psalms, teamed with Numbers, paints a beautiful picture of the Kingdom of God ruling this earth. But something is missing.



### Complete salvation

After the Millennium — then what? Where to from here? You

may be thinking, Let's just stay here and enjoy all this physical beauty and prosperity. So what if we've been here a thousand years?

But what about the countless millions who have lived and died deceived, not knowing the true God, not having a chance for salvation, not experiencing the blessings of God's Kingdom? Shall we pretend they never existed?

Well, God remembers them. He cannot forget. Come on, let's continue our voyage. We'll set the time dial to after the Millennium (Isaiah 65:19-22) by turning to Book V of Psalms (chapters 107-150).

What a sight it is that confronts us — look at all those people! It looks like everybody who has ever lived must be here. "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12, Ezekiel 37:1-28).

Deuteronomy parallels Book V of Psalms in the theme of complete salvation for man. *Deuteronomy* literally means "the second law," concluding and summarizing the first four books of the law, just as Book V of Psalms concludes the plan of God.

On the theme of Deuteronomy the Jewish Publication Society states, "The single theme of Deuteronomy is the concept of oneness and universality of God and the unity of mankind." The universality of God will be achieved when every person has had a chance to be in the Kingdom of God.

Psalms, Book V, celebrates the complete salvation of mankind. Joyful shouts of thankfulness ascend to God: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (Psalms 107:1-2).

God will ultimately redeem all willing humans from the final

enemy — death (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

But what about the one who caused all of the world's problems in the first place — Satan the devil? What will finally happen to him?

Satan, the king and god of this present world, receives, along with his demons, his punishment by judgment of the saints: "To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment — this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!" (Psalms 149:8-9).

Yes, you will judge and send Satan and his demons to their final fate, never again to deceive man (I Corinthians 6:3, Revelation 20:10).

The true brotherhood of all human beings will finally come to be reality: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing — life forevermore" (Psalms 133:1-3). We will be at one with God and also at one with each other.

All mankind joins in chorus to praise God the Father, who now dwells with them on earth in the New Jerusalem: "Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary . . . Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!" (Psalms 150:1-6).

Every book of Psalms ends with an "Amen" except Book V. Why, you ask? Because, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . . from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7).

Psalms proclaims powerful prophecy, propelling us into the past, present, future and beyond. You ask how long this voyage will last? Until the seventh of forever, and that's a long, long time. See you then! □