

DISCOVERING




CHRIST
IN THE
PSALMS


KEN FLEMING



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.



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Discovering Christ in the Psalms

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Jesus Christ is the dominant theme of Scripture. He Himself said that when we search the Scriptures, we discover that they testify of Him (John 5:39). A messianic psalm is one of the psalms in the book of Psalms that contains one or more references to God's Messiah in connection with His ministry as Prophet, His suffering as Priest, or His glory as King.

The psalms covered in this study course are limited to the ones that are quoted directly in the New Testament. May you be richly rewarded in your quest to discover Christ in the Psalms!

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is the dominant theme of Scripture. He Himself said that when we search the Scriptures, we discover that they testify of Him (John 5:39). On the day He was raised out from among the dead, He rebuked two of His followers for not understanding that the Scriptures clearly taught that the Christ would have to suffer before entering into His glory. He then began to explain those things to them from the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27). Later that same day, Jesus appeared to the apostles in Jerusalem and reminded them that what had been written about Him in “the Law of Moses, the Prophets *and the Psalms* must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44-45). We can conclude that we will be richly rewarded in our quest to discover in the book of Psalms many truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Messianic Psalms

Scholars have long used the term *Messianic Psalms* to describe those psalms that refer to Jesus the Messiah. *Messiah* is a Hebrew term meaning “anointed,” indicating an appointment to a specific task. In Old Testament times, men who held the offices of prophet, priest, or king were officially installed into their offices by being anointed with oil (Lev. 8:12; 1 Sam. 16:13; 1 Kings 19:16). The term came to mean a person who had been given special religious or civil authority.

In Greek (the language in which the New Testament was written), the word for “anointed one” or “chosen one” is *Christos*, or Christ, in English. Within the councils of the Godhead in eternity past, it was decided that God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, would come to earth as a Prophet to speak on God’s behalf (Matt. 21:11); that He would fulfill the role of Priest in mediating between sinful man and God through His death and

subsequent exaltation to God's right hand in heaven (Heb. 8:1); and that He would return to earth one day as its King to rule the world in righteousness (Rev. 19:16). The Lord Jesus Christ was God's Messiah.

The Definition of a Messianic Psalm

A messianic psalm is one of the psalms in the book of Psalms in the Bible that contains one or more references to God's Messiah in connection with His ministry as Prophet, His suffering as Priest, or His glory as King. We can identify a messianic psalm in several ways:

- *When a passage from a psalm concerning the Lord Jesus is directly quoted by a New Testament author.* For example, in Acts 13:33, Paul directly quotes Psalm 2:7, saying, “. . . He has raised up Jesus. As it is written in the second psalm: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’”
- *When a psalm contains prophecies of the coming Messiah that were recognized by the ancient Jews.* For example: Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, understood that the phrase “You are My Son” in Psalm 2:7 referred to the coming Messiah. So when Jesus stood before him at the trial, he challenged Him, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!” (Matt. 26:63). Christ answered with a quote from Daniel 7:13, “Hereafter shall ye [plural, implying the nation, not just Caiaphas] see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64 KJV, used here to demonstrate the plural usage). Thus His answer was, in effect, “Yes, I am the Christ.”
- *When parallel passages in the Old Testament confirm them.* For example, the statement in Psalm 72:8, “He shall have dominion from sea to sea,” is used again in Zechariah 9:10 of the coming King. Thus we can conclude that Psalm 72 is a messianic psalm.
- *When it speaks of an event or activity that is unique to the Messiah's person and role.* For example, in Psalm 45:6-7 we read, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. . . . therefore God, your God, has anointed you . . .” The one being addressed is clearly both deity and Messiah (the anointed one).

A detailed analysis can become very technical. We are limiting our course of study here to psalms which fall into only the first category, i.e., those psalms that are directly quoted in the New Testament concerning Christ in any or all His roles of Prophet, Priest, and King. These lessons may well lead you to further and rewarding study concerning Christ seen in other ways in the Psalms.

A Word About Hebrew Poetry

When we read and study the book of Psalms, it is important to keep in mind that it is poetry—not prose or narrative—and Hebrew poetry at that. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme, but one of its characteristics is *parallelism*, where pairs of lines relate to each other in some way.

In some pairs, the second line expresses the same thought as the first, but in different words:

“Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.” (102:1)

In others, the second line contrasts with the first line:

“For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.” (1:6)

And in still in others, the second line adds something to what is stated in the first:

“For who is God, except the LORD,
And who is a rock, except our God?” (18:31)

When you observe this parallel structure, it will not only add to your enjoyment of the Psalms, but will caution you to remember that, as poetry, the book of Psalms is not to be interpreted in the same way that doctrinal (or even narrative) passages are interpreted.

1

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

PSALM 2

According to Acts 4:25, David was the Spirit-inspired writer of Psalm 2. Although an historical event in David's life may have prompted David to pen it (such as a revolt of a subjugated nation under his dominion), the primary focus of the psalm is future, and the "players" are mankind and the members of the Godhead. At a point in time yet future, the universal rebellion against God which began in the garden of Eden and has continued down through history will be put down once and for all. Yahweh will establish His Anointed Son to rule the world from His throne in Jerusalem. The psalm ends with a call to honor the Son and submit to Him before it is too late (that is, before He comes as Judge).

God's Covenant with David

When David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17), he wanted to replace the tabernacle with a permanent temple in which to place the ark. However, God did not give him that honor; David had spent his life on the battlefield, so God chose Solomon, David's son, to be the one to build the temple now that the kingdom had been established.

God did give David some wonderful promises in which He established the dynasty of the kingdom of Israel, with David as its first ruler. Its ultimate King would be a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:8-17). These promises are known collectively as *the Davidic covenant*. Psalm 2 clearly reflects these promises, as can be seen by comparing Psalm 2:6-7 with 2 Samuel 7:10-14. These great promises are (1) a prophecy about David's greater Son, the Messiah, and (2) a preview of the Messiah's invincible kingdom.

Psalm 2 in the New Testament

The focus on Christ in Psalm 2 clearly defines it as messianic according to the guidelines given in the introduction to these studies. New Testament writers quote from it no less than seven times in connection with Jesus Christ. Jewish scholars regarded it as messianic even before Jesus came.

- Verses 1-2 are quoted in Acts 4:25-27 concerning the wholesale opposition to Jesus that resulted in His crucifixion.
- Verse 7 is quoted in Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, and Hebrews 5:5 in reference to the Messiah.
- Verses 8-9 are quoted in Revelation 2:27, and verse 9 in Revelation 12:5 and 19:15 concerning Messiah's righteous rule over the nations.

The Outline of Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is written in four paragraphs, each with its own theme, and each presented by a different "speaker."

1. David speaks of the nations' vain opposition to the Lord's Anointed (vv. 1-3).
2. God laughs at the efforts of the nations to revolt against His purposes (vv. 4-6).
3. God's Son speaks of inheriting the nations in the future (vv. 7-9).
4. The Holy Spirit counsels the nations to give homage to the Son (vv. 10-12).

Notice the titles given the Messiah: He is called God's *Anointed* in verse 2, God's *King* in verse 6, and God's *Son* in verses 7 and 11.

The Nations in Rebellion Against God (vv. 1-3)

These verses reflect the universal rebellion against God that has existed through all time and which will continue to evidence itself until the end times, when it will reach its climax. David, being a godly man who recognized and appreciated God's sovereignty over all things, finds it hard to believe that anyone would attempt to plan a revolt against God; obviously, such plans were destined to fail. The word "plot" is the same word

as “meditate” in Psalm 1. In that psalm, the godly man is characterized as one who meditates on the Holy Scriptures. In Psalm 2, the ungodly nations meditate, or devise, a plan to get out from under God’s rule; a murder is sometimes described as “premeditated” when it has been planned and devised ahead of time.

The time period for this rebellion will be just before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory to reign. At that time, a huge confederation of kings and rulers will join against Yahweh and His Anointed. This is the first time in Scripture where the word “anointed” refers to Jesus. We noted in the Introduction that prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed with oil when they were consecrated to their service. The Lord Jesus holds all three of these offices and is properly the Anointed One.

The rebel nations in the end times will be led by an evil trinity consisting of Antichrist, the False Prophet, and Satan (Revelation 13). David’s prophecy now goes on to focus on the purpose of their rebellion against God—to prevent His Anointed from taking the reins of world government. But their opposition to the sovereign purposes of God will be an exercise in futility.

A Partial Fulfillment of Psalm 2:1-2

In Acts 4 we read of the apostles Peter and John being arrested by the Jewish rulers and then warned against speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus. After they were released, they returned to the believers and all began to pray in one accord. In their prayer they quoted Psalm 2:1-2, applying it in detail to the religious and political leaders (note, both Jewish and Gentile) who had “gathered together” and plotted the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 4:27), and to the Jewish and Gentile crowds they represented. Like many prophecies of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament, Psalm 2 was partially fulfilled during His first coming and will have a complete fulfillment at His second coming.

Down through history, wicked rulers have opposed God’s chosen people. This opposition will reach its climax in a future day just before Messiah comes in His glory to rule the world.

Yahweh Replies to the Nations (vv. 4-6)

In the second paragraph of Psalm 2, God responds to the plotting of the nations. David pictures God sitting on a throne in the heavens and

simply laughing at it, expressing His scorn at the foolishness of men. Each of the three times in the book of Psalms that God is said to laugh it is a laugh of derision (cf. Ps. 37:13, 59:8). Author William MacDonald says of the nations, “Their threats are like the squeaks of a mouse against a lion.” John Phillips writes, “Can man compete with Him who stokes the nuclear fires of a billion stars?” Man may think he is something because he can take a few steps on the moon, but he is still merely mortal. God is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite, and self-existent.

This prophecy refers to the “great day of His wrath” (Rev. 6:17). But God’s wrath will prepare the earth for Christ’s coming glorious kingdom.

Mount Zion (v. 6) is a common term for Jerusalem. It is used in the book of Psalms about forty times. Originally, Jerusalem was a Jebusite fortress city (2 Sam. 5:7). After David captured it, the name *Zion* was used of the temple area. Later, *Zion* referred to the whole city of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:4). God’s “holy hill” is a synonym for the temple mount (Ps. 15:1). During the tribulation, the Jews will not be able to hold on to their capital city. Even in our times, the coalition of Muslim nations demand that it be handed over to *them*; Jerusalem is a divided city, and the Palestinians vow to “liberate” her. One day, Jerusalem will be surrounded and attacked by a coalition of wicked nations. The Antichrist will revile the name of the true God. Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trodden down until “the times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled. But in that day God will install His King on Zion, the hill of His holiness, and from there Messiah will reign.

The Revelation of the Son (vv. 7-9)

In the third section we learn that the One who is Yahweh’s Messiah and Yahweh’s King is also Yahweh’s Son. The unspoken question is: by what right does He rule? Yahweh’s Son answers from His throne that Yahweh has decreed to Him, “You are My Son.” The fact that He is Yahweh’s Son gives Him the right to rule. In reporting God’s decree to Him, He affirms that He always was, is now, and will be, the Son of God. We speak of this as *His eternal sonship*. We know from Bible verses like John 1:1-2 that the Son is eternal in nature. Christ’s eternal sonship is a most important truth.

The decree is in two parts. The first phrase, “You are My Son,” refers to His eternal relationship with God the Father. The next phrase, “Today I have begotten You,” refers to the time when God’s eternal Son was manifested as

David's physical Son. As such, He became the anointed King, the exalted Priest, and the coming Judge in fulfillment of God's promise to David (2 Sam. 7:14). The word "begotten" in verse 7 is used in a metaphorical sense to convey how the Son was plainly shown (declared) to be Messiah. He who was the eternal Son now became the Anointed Son, the promised Messiah. His status as the "messianic Son" is to be distinguished from His place in the Godhead as the eternal Son.

The occasions on which Psalm 2:7 is quoted in the New Testament will explain in what sense the messianic Son was "begotten." The first quote (in Acts 13:33) refers to the birth of Jesus. God raised Him up to Israel in His incarnation and said, "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You." At that time the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to a son who would be called the "Son of God." *He was, therefore, begotten as the messianic Son at His physical birth.* "Unto us a Son is given" (Isa. 9:6).

Then, in Acts 13:34, the very next verse (which is still linked with His messianic sonship) we read, "And that He raised Him from the dead." Thus at His resurrection also He was declared (appointed) to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). It is therefore true to say that *He was begotten as the messianic Son at His resurrection.*

Another New Testament quote from Psalm 2:7 is found in Hebrews 5:5 in the context of Christ's priesthood. When Jesus Christ returned to heaven, He became our Great High Priest. God said to Him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten You. . . . You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." We draw from this that *He was begotten as the messianic Son at His ascension.*

And finally, Christ will enter fully into His messianic role when He comes in His glory. He will assume His rightful place on the throne of David in Jerusalem and claim the nations for His inheritance. Hebrews 1:5-6 quotes Psalm. 2:7-8 in this connection concerning His coming to reign. "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. . . . When He *again* brings His firstborn into the world . . ." The word "again" refers to His second coming. And thus it is correct to say that *He will be begotten as the messianic Son at His second coming.* Verse 7 is therefore a summary statement associating Christ's birth, resurrection, ascension (as to His heavenly priesthood), and second coming with His messianic sonship.

The Significance of Christ's Sonship (v. 8)

God the Father has promised His Son the nations for His inheritance. From these nations a host of people will come to Him and become His possession. Satan offered Jesus the world's nations during His temptation in the wilderness. He showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (Matt. 4:8). He then said, "All these things will I give You if You will fall down and worship me." Jesus refused and said to him, "Away with you, Satan." But here in Psalm 2, when the Father invites the Son to ask for the nations as His inheritance, He complies. Thus the ends of the earth will become His possession. At that time, the kingdoms of this world will have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

The Son and His Scepter (v. 9)

One day, perhaps very soon, the church will be caught up to be with Christ in heaven. Following that event, the Antichrist will acquire rule over the nations of the world in opposition to God and His Son. The Father will then give the Son the authority to deal with all their insubordination and rebellion. When the Antichrist and the False Prophet lead their armies in the climax of the battle of Armageddon, Messiah will suddenly appear in power and great glory. He will break them with His scepter, here called a "rod of iron," and shatter them like a piece of pottery. The book of Revelation borrows language from Psalm 2 when it speaks of Him who judges and makes war leading the armies of heaven to strike the nations and rule them with His iron rod as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 2:27, 12:5 and especially 19:11-16).

The Counsel to Give Homage to God's Son (vv. 10-12)

In this final section, the leaders of the nations are warned to give God's Son the homage due to Him. Most commentators believe that the unnamed "speaker" in this section is God the Holy Spirit. He is warning the kings to be wise—they should submit to the rule of God's Son *now*. They should "serve the LORD with fear" and "rejoice with trembling." This means that they should find true pleasure in submitting to God and revering Him. The reader may like to refer to the use of the expression "fear and trembling" in the New Testament (1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12).

In their submission, the kings and judges are to “kiss the Son” as Samuel the prophet kissed David when he anointed him to be king (1 Sam. 10:10). This kiss was a mark of respect and submission. It is the only logical thing for them—and for us—to do. But we know from biblical prophecy that those kings will utterly refuse to receive Him. It will become the great day of Yahweh’s wrath, and who will be able to stand (Rev. 6:17)? His wrath will be kindled “but a little” (better, “kindled quickly”), leading to their destruction.

The psalm closes with a beatitude that is both true and comforting. “Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (cf. 5:8; 34:8; 110:8-10). God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only refuge from the wrath of God, the wrath that He will pour out on those who refuse to submit to Him.

In Conclusion

This psalm helps us, as genuine disciples of Christ,

- To better discern the chronically rebellious nature of our world against the Lord, and its futility.
- To appreciate God’s esteem for His beloved Son.
- To cultivate a healthy fear of the Lord and to recognize the blessing of obeying Him.
- To anticipate the fulfillment of God’s plan for His Son to rule this world in righteousness one day, knowing we will reign with Him.

DISCOVERING CHRIST IN THE PSALMS

EXAM BOOKLET AK '15 (2 UNITS) DCP

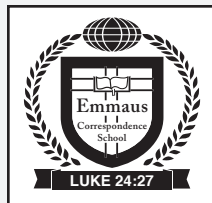
STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

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COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmas Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a Single Page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue
- B. green
- C. yellow
- D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

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CHAPTER 1 EXAM**CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD
PSALM 2****EXAM GRADE**

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

- The author of Psalm 2 was
 A. David. C. Asaph.
 B. Moses. D. Solomon. _____
- The first king of the earthly kingdom that Jesus Christ was
 in the line of was
 A. King Herod. C. King Solomon.
 B. King Saul. D. King David. _____
- New Testament writers quoted from Psalm 2 _____ times
 in connection with Christ.
 A. 3 C. 10
 B. 7 D. 12 _____
- The first three verses reveal that, in the end times,
 A. nations will join together in rebellion against God and
 His Anointed.
 B. the Lord will draw many to Himself.
 C. the world will live in harmony.
 D. the Lord's Anointed will sit on the throne in Zion. _____
- Yahweh will _____ at the plans of the rebels.
 A. mourn C. get angry
 B. laugh D. rejoice _____
- Mount Zion is a common biblical term for
 A. heaven. C. Jerusalem.
 B. the temple. D. the church. _____

7. The statement “You are My Son” in verse 7 refers to
- A. the eternal relationship between God and the Anointed One.
 - B. the relationship between God and all believers.
 - C. the relationship between God and Israel.
 - D. the relationship between God and Adam. _____
8. The statement “Today I have begotten You” in verse 7 relates to
- A. Christ’s birth.
 - B. Christ’s resurrection.
 - C. Christ’s birth, resurrection, and ascension.
 - D. Christ’s birth, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. _____
9. God decreed that He would give His Anointed Son _____ for His inheritance.
- A. the heavens
 - B. the nations
 - C. the nation of Israel
 - D. the church _____
10. The Holy Spirit warns the earthly rulers to
- A. submit to the rule of God’s Son.
 - B. run away from God’s Son.
 - C. make better plans to fight God’s Son.
 - D. forge a better coalition to conquer God’s Son. _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

In what way does this psalm give you a better understanding of the issues in our world?
