

## Psalm 73

**Read Psalm 73:1-5:** Sometimes we read the bible; and it seems like the same stuff all over again. If it feels like we are reading a newspaper; it is probably not changing our life. It can become like *background music*, flowing right over our ears. That can be a prompting of the Holy Spirit that we are just trying to *get through the material*; rather than put in an effort to make *a new discovery in Christ*. Whenever that happens, we are being encouraged to slow down; and pull the car over...and look further into the details. This week, we will take a minute to get a little deeper into the details.

### Psalms is Like 5 Books

You may have seen a note above Psalm 73 as being *the beginning of book three* at the top of the page in your bible. Psalm 72 ended with an ending salutation. There is a reason for that. **Psalms is divided into five parts/sub-books.** Each of these sub-books are based on one of the books of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). In addition, these five books picture the Church and people of God throughout the ages. With that in mind, Psalms will take on a much deeper meaning for you, provide you with further understanding of the Plan of God and open your mind to a greater appreciation of His Word.

**Book 1:** Psalm 1-41 is like Genesis

- The larger than life experiences and trials of God's followers and how God redeems their lives

**Book 2:** Psalm 42-72 is like Exodus

- Believers being promised protection and deliverance

**Book 3:** Psalm 73-89 is like Leviticus

- Separation of things that are holy in a moral wasteland, and sacrificed lives

**Book 4 :** Psalm 90-106 is like Numbers

- Leaving society; and the return to simple living in God's presence

**Book 5:** Psalm 107-150 is like Deuteronomy

- Millennial reign with Christ (the way life should be)

## Some Rules of Biblical Interpretation

The Bible is like many other books written by certain authors. There are intended patterns that add to the reader's comprehension. These are all called *Literary Devices*. Here are a few Hebrew literary devices in the bible that you should know:

- ***Synchronous Parallelism*** (two sequential verses that mean the same thing). Hebrew poetry is often based on saying the same thing two different ways, to add perspective, context and emphasis and clarity. This psalm has matching verses throughout it. The books of: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes all are filled with sequential parallel verses.
- ***Expositional Constancy*** Means that symbolic parables and visions and representations of earthly things reflecting spiritual realities remain the same. For example: Birds usually represent something unclean and demonic that comes from a distance to convey a dreaded message. The number 7 usually refers to God's perfection and completion, while the number 6 refers to men's lack of being complete or right, etc...
- ***Rule of First Mention*** Means that if you want to more-fully understand a word used in the Bible, find its first usage. It will give you the best context.

## Having Intellectual Honesty and Facing Your Cognitive Biases

The Bible is called a *sword* because it cuts us and offends our sensibilities and desired view of ourselves. Idols tend to convey what you want to believe about yourself and others. *That is because they are home made*; to give us comfort and a license for otherwise unacceptable behavior.

Unbelievers don't like to read the Bible because it seems to be depressing and restrictive. Most highway speed limits and local ordinances tend to appear that way to those who live in disregard to others. Even so, It saves countless lives.

Cults tend to misuse biblical texts to justify positions and actions that are the opposite of the intentions of scripture. Beyond that, we all have a tendency to take shortcuts to reduce the amount of studying and comparison to discover the true meaning of a verse. We want to be decisive; and move on, rather than get *bogged down* in something that we believe

that we already know. The funny thing about the Holy Spirit as our teacher is that he is full of surprises. To understand scripture we have to cut it straight down the middle.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)*

We have to take the scripture at literal face value; regardless of what we want to believe, or what we expect. The Holy Spirit seems to keep us off balance. We want to *tie a bow on it* and be done with it. The Holy Spirit is *a pattern breaker*. Not everything is knowable to us in advance or in retrospect. This applies to biblical interpretation and the interpretation of our life experiences.

Some of the Jews read the scriptures faithfully, and they ended up way off course. How is that possible? Their desire for a certain result exceeded their commitment to take it at face value. The interpretation of the messianic scriptures about a suffering messiah changed when Jesus was crucified. They did away with their initial idea that the messiah prince would suffer for us...because it conflicted with their desire to be considered righteous. Jesus did not come to compliment them.

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for [a]Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:1-5)*

These **desires for a certain reality in the face of reason are known as cognitive dissonance**. It is ok to refuse worldly messages and media bias that conflict with scripture...but it is not ok to always think that we are on the right side of the equation. Here are the *most-common cognitive biases* that people have when they read the Bible. A bias does not mean that you are wrong. It means that there is some level of *conjecture* on our part. You have to be willing to accept that you might be wrong to get it right.

- ***The Confirming Bias:*** In life, we might conclude that all rich people are spoiled, or that all Democrats are morally compromised. We refuse to entertain opposing views that conflict with our beliefs. I.e. The Holy Spirit had to re-orient Peter to his view of the Gentiles.

- ***The Hindsight Bias:*** The tendency to see everything that we experience or read as confirming things as more predictable than they are. i.e. I got a flat tire because I didn't pray enough tah morning.
- ***The Anchoring Bias:*** To be only influenced by the conclusions that reinforce your first impression. Jesus was thought to be an illegitimate son born prior to marriage from Joseph and Mary. The Pharisees couched their views of him and the prostitutes and drunkards in that context.
- ***The Misinformation Effect:*** To tie in our belief about something an event after the fact. Job's friends concluded that he was a sinner; who had his past catching up to him.
- ***The Action Observer Effect:*** To assign our unfortunate experiences to ourselves as being not our fault and from external forces; and others misfortunes as the result of moral failures. Much of Judaism fell into this problem. That is why they added the oral law and endless writings to explain away God's Law. This gave them license to skirt the purpose of scripture. They got good at washing their hands; but not in forgiving others.
- ***The False Consensus Effect:*** This is to overestimate how much other people agree with you.
- ***The Halo Effect:*** Making our first impression the enduring mark of a person. The fruit of a person's life takes time to observe. Some people think of God in the Old Testament as being harsh and judgemental. Others who read just the New Testament conclude that there is no place of capital punishment or protocol.

All said, we need to just let the Bible speak for itself. It will not contradict itself. If God is a lion; then he does not need to be protected or explained away. Just let him out to do his work.

*For God is not the author of [i]confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:33)*

*I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, (Isaiah 45:5)*

*If anyone adds to these things, [j]God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God[k] shall take away his part from the [l]Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)*

**Read Psalm 73:6-14:** Like the psalmist, we make assumptions about the wicked. We see them not *playing by the rules of fair play or being considerate*. We see them stepping on others' rights with impunity. They hurt our feelings, and angers us. That is righteous anger; up to the point, where we want to harm or kill them.

We tend to dislike ungodly and evildoers. It is an offense to us. We want them to act right. It is a picture of selfishness. Sometimes we can superimpose this same view on others that have conflicting needs with us as well. We demonize our opponents. And yet; God loves these people too. Satan wants us to hate those who have a different world view; instead of praying for their salvation. Jesus was probably not as quite as Republican as we are. We ask ourselves “What is wrong with this picture?”

Part of the problem is envy. Who cares about the benefits others seem to obtain; if God is being good to us? God is their judge; and we are protected.

Over time, we begin to learn how other's abundances are like a sedative that woos you away from daily struggles into an *artificial sense of independence and self-safety*. It allows the person to live in self-allusion of *deserving something extra*. It is a very dangerous place to be. It is far more dangerous to not care to have feelings for others than we think.

**Read Psalm 73:15-24:** The psalmist finally sees that there is a *waterfall to eternity* ahead for these sinners. There will be a day of reckoning and shock and fear. This life of self absorption will become a horrible crash. We just need to see things from a longer-term perspective. This world is full of illusions. Satan tempts us in our imagination. We think that we are better off being left alone. The enticements to remain unchanged are never fulfilled. It begins with our childhood; and never stops. Maybe we are like cattle in a chute getting prodded forward to be transported to a safer place. We are being moved out of our comfort zone. They are being left behind to fend for themselves.

**Read Psalm 73: 25-28:** We have put our faith in the only one who can deliver. We need to turn off the lying influences. God's word is pulling us to freedom and peace. The

world is painting false pictures of empty pursuits; that result in loss. It is an empty feeling seeing everyone leaving God's shelter. We question our own decisions and perspective. We are pilgrims here on earth.

*For our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20)*