

1. **Psalm 37**

Aim: To realise that righteousness and blessing are found in following the Lord, while rebellion against Him ends in futility and destruction.

Read Psalm 37

This is a Psalm of David. Is it a Psalm of prophecy, law, history or wisdom? How can you tell?
(It is more a psalm of wisdom; it has exhortations and reflections on the way life is.)

The wisdom in Psalms/Proverbs is different to God's promises. In what way?

God's promises are statements of what shall be done. Proverbs make more general observations about what is likely to happen if wisdom is followed, but it doesn't always happen that way.

Does this Psalm, then, read more like a psalm of wisdom proverbs or more like a psalm of strict promises? So, how should we be careful in applying what we read?

It reads much more like a psalm of wisdom proverbs. So, we should realise that the statements in this psalm are general wisdom truths, to which there will sometimes be exceptions, as life is complex.

God's grace to those who seek Him (vv.1-6)

What do the righteous crave compared to the wicked? (vv.1-6)

The righteous saints crave relationship with God and His righteousness. Compared to that, the easy prosperity of the wicked is of very limited value.

Why is the desire of the righteous the better choice?

Wealth fades, but God will reliably deliver both righteousness and good judgment to His people.

What are the means that God prescribes for pursuing his righteousness?

Firstly, trusting in the LORD, then doing good, cultivating faithfulness, delighting in God Himself, decisively committing to His way; trusting in Him to change us. (cf Rom 8:1-11, Eph 4:17-24)

How can this section comfort the godly poor?

Spiritual welfare outweighs temporary prosperity. (cf. the rich man versus Lazarus in Luke 16:25-26)

The temporary prosperity of the wicked versus the eternal blessings of the righteous (vv.7-22)

How does God limit the success of wicked men?

God limits the duration of their prosperity and will bring them to account, even to perishing (vv.9,10,13, 17, 20). He will even give them a taste of their own medicine (v.15). They will not enjoy posterity (v.22).

What contrasting principles do you see repeated over and over again in verses 7-22?

God will bless the godly and they will inherit the land. Contrastingly, the wicked will flourish for a time, and then be cut off.

How is this spiritually true for us? (cf. Heb 11:8-10, 11:24-26; Matt 19:28-30)

God does generally bless in this life, but while we also suffer for Christ's name in this life, we will inherit great and gracious rewards in the next life.

Even if we are not blessed with material prosperity in this life, what comforts does this passage hold for the Christian believer?

Righteousness is better than riches (v.16), the Lord will sustain us (v.17), our inheritance is forever (v.18), we will have nothing to be ashamed of (v.19).

Faithfulness to and from the LORD (vv.23-40)

In what ways does God display His faithfulness and love to us, in this life?

He establishes our steps and delights in our way (v.23, v.31), He holds our hand (v.24), He never deserts us and always provides (v.25), He delivers us from judgement/danger (v.33), He rightly punishes the wicked for our sake (v.34,40), He gives us a posterity (v.37), He help us in time of trouble (v.39).

In what ways have you experienced God's faithfulness? (Discuss)

How is God faithful to us? How does this connect to Jesus? (cf. John 3:16, 17:1-3; Heb 5:8-10)

God promises eternal life and abiding with Him forever (vv.27-29). God has faithfully provided His Son Jesus to save us and give us eternal life.

But why does God ultimately rescue the righteous?

Because they take refuge in Him! (v.40) God loves justice and does not forsake His own (v.28).

What is the main theme of this Psalm? (Discuss) Where do you find your security?

Summary: Trust God and pursue righteousness (cf. Matt 6:33). The Lord blesses and rewards the righteous, but the wicked will perish in His righteous judgement.

2. **Psalm 42 & 43**

Aim: To encourage us to seek God and to hope in Him, even when we are in a state of despair.

Read Psalm 42

Thirsting for God (vv.1-4)

Despite his trying situation, what is the deepest desire of the psalmist? (vv.1-2)

He desires God. Like a deer in a dry land that thirsts for water lest it perishes, he thirsts for God more than anything else. His desire for God includes worshipping Him at the temple (v.4).

What appears to be the situation for the psalmist in relation to God's temple? (v.2, v.4)

We understand that he (and God's people) had been exiled so that they were unable to come to the temple.

As a Christian, is a temple or church building to be significant for us in worship? (John 4:21-24)

No; not anymore! For Christians, the place where we worship is no longer important. What's important is worshipping God in Spirit and Truth; worshipping God through the Spirit of Christ and in the truth of Christ.

Although as a Christian the place of worship is no longer important, what should we have in common with the psalmist? (cf. Phil 3:7-11)

We ought to desire God. We ought to thirst and seek our God, to know Him more, to be growing in our relationship with Him. This ought to be the strongest desire of our life. Is it?

What are the trials that the psalmist experiences and which causes him to seek God more? (vv.3-4)

The psalmist is taunted by people who mock the existence of God, or at the very least, question God's care and goodness to His people. He is also distressed that he and God's people were separated from the temple; in the Old Testament period, the temple stood for the presence and glory of God.

Our Hope in God (vv.5-11)

Despite being in despair, what three things does the psalmist do in vv.5-8?

He instructs his soul to hope in God (v.5), he reminds himself of God's greatness and goodness (vv.6-8), and he prays to God (v.8).

How good are we at imitating the psalmist's response when we are in despair?

So often we don't instruct our soul to hope in God, but we fill our mind with negative thoughts. We often forget God and His faithfulness and goodness to us in the past. We also don't pray, but complain.

Consider Lamentations 3:19-25. What do we see Jeremiah doing, even though Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was decimated, and God's people were either killed or exiled?

Like the psalmist, Jeremiah comforted his soul and gave his heart hope by recalling to mind the mercy and faithfulness of God – may we do the same when we go through difficult times.

Read vv.9-11. The psalmist is very troubled. What does he do with his many alarming thoughts?

The psalmist expresses his thoughts to the Lord. He is honest with God in regard to how he feels. He feels the Lord has forgotten him (v.9). He feels the Lord has afflicted him (v.7). He feels the Lord is unwilling to rescue him (v.10). Do we share our inner thoughts and struggles with the Lord?

Despite how the psalmist felt, what do you notice about his manner and his conclusion? (v.11)

He reverently spoke to the Lord, and he was confident that the Lord would help him. God was his hope.

NB: The psalmist didn't have a false hope. The Lord looked after His people in exile, and brought them back after 70 years. Our hope in God is not in vain also. He works all things out for our good (Rom 8:28).

Read Psalm 43 (NB: In the oldest manuscripts, Psalm 42 & 43 were linked together and read as one psalm)

In vv.1-2, what are the problems the psalmist is facing?

The psalmist is mourning because he feels the Lord has rejected him and his people, who are oppressed and afflicted by their enemies. The Lord has not fought their cause and delivered them from the enemies' hand.

What does the psalmist ask God to do about his (and God's people) situation? (vv.3-4) Why?

He asks for God to lead him by His light and truth. He was confident that this would bring vindication and deliverance, and where God's people would be able to return and worship the Lord at the temple.

In the NT, who/what is God's "light & truth"? What's so significant about this? (John 8:12, 14:6)

Jesus is the light and the truth. It is He who leads us to God and also in the true worship of God.

In the final verse (v.5) of Psalm 43, what does the psalmist conclude with? What about us?

Through God's light and truth we have hope. It is the same for us in Christ (Heb 6:17-20; 1 Peter 1:3).

Summary: Like the psalmist, may we seek and thirst for God continually, both when we are in despair and when things are good. And when in despair, may God's light & truth fill us with hope.

3. **Psalm 46**

Aim: To trust in God, who is our ever present help in time of trouble, and not to fear.

Review: *What should we be seeking and thirsting for at all times? (Psalm 42:1-2)*

We should seek and thirst continually for God and a deeper walk with Him.

When we are in despair, what can help and encourage us? How? (Psalm 43:3)

God's light and truth (His Spirit & Word) help and encourage us. Everything is put into right perspective.

Read Psalm 46

What is the general tone of this psalm? Discuss.

The general tone of the psalm is confident and exultant. It glorifies God for His greatness.

God our Refuge and Strength (vv.1-3)

What is the central truth of vv.1-3? What is the central consequence of that truth for us?

God is our refuge and strength (v.1). Therefore, we will not fear (v.2).

According to this psalm, what kind of circumstances should we even not fear in? Why?

The psalmist describes the world breaking apart. Even then, we should not fear, for God is our refuge.

What do you think the psalmist means by saying that God is "our refuge", "our strength", and our "very present help in trouble"? How have you seen this in your own life? [Discuss]

God protects His people as a strong refuge, He strengthens us when we feel weak and fearful, and He is always with us to help us in times of trouble. He is our all in all.

Consider Mark 4:35-41 in relation to Psalm 46:1-3. Who cares for us and stills our fears?

Jesus! He is a refuge and strength to those who trust in Him.

The City of God (vv.4-7)

What "city of God" is being talked about in v.4?

It's Jerusalem; the city (in the time of the psalmist) where God's temple was, and where God's glorious presence dwelt between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies of the temple.

What "river" is being spoken of in v.4?

It's not a physical river, but a metaphor for the blessings that flow to us because of God's presence; because of God being Israel's refuge and strength (v.1), and deliverer (vv.5-6).

Why should Jerusalem's inhabitants be glad if the nations are "roaring" against them?

Because God will preserve the city by His awesome power (cf. 2 Kings 19:32-37).

God no longer dwells in a building but in the hearts of all those who are in Christ. What blessing do we have, that should make us full of gladness and joy? (cf. John 4:13-14; 7:37-39)

We have the water of life, the Holy Spirit, who enables us to know God's blessings in full.

God the Judge and Deliverer (vv.8-11)

What does v.8 remind us of so that we might not fear any trouble?

It reminds us that God has great and awesome power to rescue and deliver His people.

What examples in the Old Testament remind us of God's great power to deliver?

Noah's family in the flood; Israel's deliverance from Egypt; Israel conquering Canaan; the defeat of Israel's enemies, such as, Assyria, Babylon and Nineveh.

Will God always punish the nations? (cf. Isa 2:4; 9:4-7) Whose kingdom will bring about change?

No! One day God will bring evil and strife to an end. This will happen when Jesus comes in His kingdom.

How might vv.8-9 encourage us as we see evil increasing about us?

It helps us see that God is truly great, and it is He who sits on the throne. By His great power, He will both rescue us, as well as bring all trouble to an end. Indeed, He has something better planned for us.

Consider vv.10-11. What does God assure us of in these verses?

God assures us that He is GOD! Despite the raging of the nations, He will be exalted among the nations.

How should we respond, even in times of trouble?

We should cease fearing and striving (v.10) by knowing and acknowledging God's sovereign power and control. He will work things out for our good if we love and trust in Him (Rom 8:28).

Consider Phil 4:4-7. In the light of who God is, how should we be?

We should be rejoicing, and not be anxious, but know God's peace guarding our hearts and minds.

Summary: God is all powerful. We do not ever need to fear. He will protect and keep us.

4. Psalm 49

Aim: To realise the folly of trusting in riches (rather than God), and the blessing of godly wisdom.

Psalm 49: It's Primary Point (vv.1-4)

Is this a psalm of exaltation, commiseration, wisdom, law, history or something else?

This psalm is primarily a psalm of wisdom (cf. especially vv.3-4) in living life in a fallen world.

The Psalmist's Predicament (vv.5-6)

What scenario did the psalmist face? (vv.5-6)

The psalmist lived in days of adversity and iniquity because of the way rich people trusted in their riches.

Although the psalmist may have been troubled by this, what should our response be?

If we are in the Lord, we should not fear – even if adversity and wickedness increases.

The Psalmist's Perception (vv.7-12)

Why is it fruitless to trust in riches? (vv.7-9; cf. also Luke 12:16-21)

Riches can't buy eternal redemption; riches can't defeat death and buy us eternal life. If we are not "rich toward God" (by following and trusting Christ), then we will perish and forfeit our soul (cf. Matt 16:26).

What else does wisdom teach us in vv.10-12?

Death is the great leveller of the rich and poor, the stupid and the senseless. The reality that we can't take anything with us should teach us that riches are transient. We ought not to boast in our riches, but in knowing God and being right with Him (cf. Jer 9:23-24).

What alone can buy human redemption in eternity? (Eph 1:7-8, 13-14; Col 1:13-14, 19-23)

Only the sacrifice of Christ's blood could buy our redemption, if appropriated by faith in Christ.

The Psalmist's Place (vv.13-15)

What is the destination of the foolish compared to the destination of the upright?

The foolish (those who trust in their riches, and not in God) are like sheep for the slaughter; destined for the grave (Sheol). However, the upright can look forward to ruling over them when their time ends (v.14), and of redemption from the grave and reception by God Himself (v.15).

Read 1 Cor 15:12-19. If there was no redemption from the grave for the righteous, would we be particularly better off than the wicked?

No! We would be deluded, and ought to be pitied!

Read 1 Cor 15:20-26, 50-57. How does Christ's precedent over death already assure us?

Christ has been the first to be raised, and we will follow. God will raise us up with an imperishable and immortal body like Christ's body; thus, through Christ we will have victory over death to God's glory!

Pride in Possessions (vv.16-20)

How does vv.17-20 pop the bubble of human pomp (ie, having pride in what we possess)?

Death brings human wealth and glory to an end. Living people congratulate themselves, but follow their dead ancestors to the grave (vv.18-19). Worse still, they will never see the light of God's presence!

Why are these humans compared to beasts in v.20?

Humans when blinded by pomp, live 'without understanding'; ie, according to "brute beast" appetites. Such blindness dehumanises them. Realised humanity demands spiritual awareness and heavenly wisdom.

In the light of wisdom, what should the upright and godly person not do? (vv.5, 16)

We should not fear when the wicked increase and when the rich prosper. They will come to an end. We also should not feel deprived – for by faith in God we are redeemed and have eternal riches in God.

Consider Psalm 49 in relation to modern Australia. What do we need to be wary of?

We need to watch out for the praise of men, the pride of life, human glory and materialism. These blind us to God's wisdom and His priority in our life. It is in Christ that we find true and lasting blessings!

Consider Jam 1:9-12 and Phil 2:3-11. How do these confirm the wisdom of Psalm 49?

They confirm that wealth and pride are fleeting, whereas God graciously blesses the humble and will reward the persevering and obedient with ultimate glory. Christ is our supreme example.

Who is the ultimate practitioner of the wisdom of Psalm 49?

Jesus! He had no earthly treasures, but the most prized possession of all – a perfect relationship with God.

What changes can we make to put Psalm 49 into practice? [Discuss]

Summary: When we see the wicked prosper, we need not fear or feel deprived. We can rejoice that while their wealth and glory fade, our redemption in Christ is permanent and glorious!

5. Psalm 50

Aim: God is the great Judge, and He calls us to repent and to worship Him rightly and to live uprightly.

Psalm 50: The Judge Summons (vv.1-6)

Read vv.1-4. What do we learn about God?

He is the mighty king, who has the authority to speak and summon people for judgment. His glory had been revealed in Zion through the temple. He is to be feared and revered (Heb 12:28-29).

The Lord is judge over all (Gen 18:25; Heb 12:23). Who also comes under His judgment? (vv.4-6)

The Lord also judges His own people. Israel was not exempt from judgment. Is that a surprise?

Should we expect God to judge Christians? (cf. Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 4:17).

The New Testament clearly teaches that Christians will be judged, and by Christ Himself (John 5:21-23).

What must we bear in mind when it comes to Christians being judged? (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 3:10-15)

Christians will never be judged for their sin, for Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins. However, we will be judged in regard to how well we served Jesus in His kingdom. Rewards will be given accordingly.

The Judge's Case against Ritual (vv.7-15)

Why is God displeased with His people? (vv.7-15)

Even though God's people offered sacrifices, according to their covenant with God, they offered them by rote; their hearts were far from Him (cf. Isa 29:13). They did not worship the Lord with thankfulness, or fulfill their vows to God, or pray to Him, or honour Him when He helped them (vv.14-15).

What does the Lord mean by His words in vv.9-13?

His people thought that He was pleased by having them sacrifice countless animals they owned, but God reminds them that He was the one who owned all the cattle and beasts already. Animal sacrifices were not about "how many", but finding forgiveness for one's sins, and also in giving thanks and praise to God.

What do we learn from 1 Sam 15:22 and Psa 51:16-17?

God never wanted vain offerings, but obedient hearts that would turn to Him in repentance and trust!

In Heb 10:1-10 and Heb 13:15-16, what do we learn about sacrifices?

The Old Testament sacrifices highlighted sin and the need for atonement, but they didn't really atone for sin. Only Christ's sacrifice, to which the animal sacrifices point, could bring true and lasting forgiveness for sin and a right standing with God. And now, since Christ's death and resurrection, the only sacrifices left for us to make are honour to God, and thanksgiving and praise to Him, through Christ our Lord.

What danger do we face in offering "right sacrifices" wrongly? (Rom 3:19-24)

We risk thinking that our religious works save us, rather than God's grace through faith in Christ.

The Judge's Case against Hypocrisy (vv.16-21)

Why was God so incensed with His people who didn't follow Him (the "wicked")? (vv.16-20)

They acted like people who knew God (by their talk; v.16), but their lives were completely inconsistent with their talk (they're hypocrites). They hated God's discipline and cast His words from them (v.17), they endorsed sin and associated with sinners (v.18), they spoke deceitful & slanderous words (vv.19-20).

What serious error of judgment had the "wicked" made in regard to God? (v.21)

They thought that God was just like them; winking at sin and accepting of it. Many are like that today!

If we mirror read this section, how then should we honour God in our lives?

We should (in thanks) love discipline, heed God's words, hate sin and be distinctively holy, speak truth and edification, and understand that God is not like us; He is high above, holy and pure, and to be feared.

The Judge's Appeal (vv.22-23)

What had the wicked amongst God's people really done? (v.22) What lesson is there here for us?

They had forgotten God's holy character, and did not fear Him. We also will fall away if we forget God.

God issues a solemn warning of destruction. What's His real intent? (v. 22)

It's no idle threat! God has the power to fulfill His word. But He wanted them to consider their ways and to repent of their sins. God's desire is for the wicked to repent and be saved (v.23b) – for He is gracious.

What does repentance look like, both for the people of the psalmist's day, and for us? (v.23)

There is a heart change where we honour God and worship Him with thanks. There is a behavioural change where we obey Him. Repentance, together with faith, is core to the Gospel (Acts 2:38, 3:19).

Summary: God is not like us. He is holy, and He will judge us. But before judgment falls, He calls us to repent; to worship Him rightly and to follow Him uprightly. What grace!

6. Psalm 78

Aim: To realise that Israel's history serves as a warning to remember God and to walk in His ways.

The Big Picture and the Big Purpose (vv.1-8)

Who was this psalm written for? (vv.1-4) What kind of literature is it; law, history, wisdom, praise?
It was written for coming generations of Israelites. It contains instructions, parables and sayings, so it is part of wisdom literature. Also, it recounts what God has done, so it is historical literature.

What purpose does this recounting of history serve for future generations? (v.4)
It reminds us of God's greatness and goodness, despite Israel's unfaithfulness and rebellion. It ought to cause us to praise God and to make sure that future generations know how good and glorious the Lord is.

What else are each generation to do with this psalm, and how are they to respond to it? (vv.5-8)
They are to pass it down to each new generation (vv.5-6), so that they will trust God, remember His works, keep His commands (v.7), prepare their hearts for Him, and be faithful to Him (v.8).

The big picture of the Old Testament tells us of the great works of God. This alone is reason enough to plunge into it. But what else do His works in Biblical history reveal? (v.7)
They reveal God's glorious and trustworthy character, which is essential for trusting Him.

God's Mighty Works and Just Judgements (vv.9-64)

How do the sons of Ephraim anticipate Israel all the way through their history? (vv.9-11)
They broke God's covenant, refused to walk in His Law, and forgot His deeds and miracles.

How did God mightily show grace to His people? How did they respond? (vv.12-20)
God graciously delivered Israel from Egypt and provided for them in the desert, despite their sin (vv.12-16). But they continued in sin, testing the Lord and complaining and mistrusting Him (vv.19-20).

How did God respond to their behaviour, and yet what do we see God still giving them? (vv.21-29)
God's righteous judgment fell on them for their sin and for the way they treated His grace and kindness with contempt (vv.21-22). Yet, God continued to be gracious to them, by giving them so much (vv.23-29).

What was the purpose of God's just judgments? What did Israel fail to do? (vv.30-33)
Israel was meant to learn from the Lord's judgments by turning away from their sin. Because they refused to repent, God brought further judgments on them to humble them (v.33).

What cycle do we continually see throughout Israel's history in verses 34-41?
Israel continually rebelled, and God judged them; not with the intent to destroy them, but to bring them to repentance. God is incredibly patient, gracious and faithful, despite their sin paining His heart (vv.40-41).

What was a key element to Israel's rebellion? (vv.42-53)
They forgot God (v.42); in particular His power and His grace.

How then should we apply this to ourselves (we also who stray)? (cf. Hebrews 3:7-19, 12:4-11)
We are not to harden our hearts by refusing to trust and obey God. Instead, we are to view the Lord's judgments as His discipline to bring us to repentance and back into a right relationship with Himself.

How did Israel provoke God in the Promised Land? How did God discipline them? (vv.54-64)
They rebelled against His law (v.56), and committed idolatry (v.58), and so God abandoned His tabernacle that He instituted through Moses (v.60), and brought violence against His people (vv.61-64).

God's Gracious Kindness and our Right Response (vv.65-72)

At the right time, how did God graciously deliver His people again (by Asaph's time)? (vv.65-72)
God rescued and shepherded His people through Judah's line (v.68). Through king David, He also had a temple built for Himself in Jerusalem, in which His presence would dwell with the people (v.69).

How do these verses foreshadow God's greatest deliverance; the deliverance of His people through David's great son, the Messiah? Cf. John 1:14 ("tabernacled amongst us"), 4:21-24, 10:11
We now worship God and enjoy His presence through spiritual worship and truth that has been realised through Jesus Christ; It is He, and not a building, that enables us to know and meet with God. Jesus is also the good Shepherd, who not only shepherds us, but laid down His life to rescue us from our sins.

Read 1 Cor 10:1-13. How has Paul used exactly what Psalm 78 recounts? Why?
Paul notes that Israel's history is provided to warn and remind us not to crave evil, nor to fall into idolatry, nor to act immorally, nor to try God, nor grumble and provoke Him. Rather, we are encouraged to trust God's faithfulness (v.13), and through Him, to resist sin (vv.12-13) for His glory and praise.

Summary: **Biblical history reminds us of God's glorious character; He alone is faithful, gracious and good. Part of His goodness is to discipline us for our sins in order to bring us back to Himself.**

7. Psalm 96

Aim: A call to worship the Lord, who is great and glorious, and who is coming to judge in righteousness.

Overview: Declaring God's Glory (vv.1-6)

We are called to sing to the Lord. Who is the Lord? What does His name signify? (Exod 3:13-14)
In our English Bibles, the capitalised name, "LORD", is "Yahweh" in the Hebrew. This name declares that God is eternal: He alone is the One who is "I was, I am, and I will be" (cf. Rev 4:8).

What does the opening command "to sing" imply about how our heart should be toward the Lord?
We should have joy and delight in the Lord. We "sing" when we are delighted and thankful. In the NT we are encouraged to have this same heart, especially in the light of Christ (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16-17).

What do you think the emphasis about singing "a new song" suggests? (v.1)
Our worship of God should be fresh and vibrant – may our worship of God never be stale and formal.

Why should we sing with joy and worship the Lord, according to vv.2-6?
The Lord saves (v.2), He performs wondrous deeds (v.3), He is glorious and great (vv.3-4), He is our Creator, and in His being and character, there is splendour and majesty, as well as strength and glory.

How universal is this response to be? Who should do it? (vv.1-3)
The whole earth should worship the Lord (v.1). God's wonderful deeds (v.2), and His glory (v.3), are to be made known in all the earth, so that all may come and worship the Lord (not just the Jews).

How does this psalm find fulfilment in the New Testament? (cf. Acts 2:1-11, 46-47)
After the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, God's people declared (even miraculously) the mighty deeds of God, and were filled with song and praise, so that others might hear of God's salvation through Christ, and come to be part of God's saved and worshipping people.

What is the declaration of God's glory and salvation leading to? (Rev 7:9-12)
It's all leading to the glorious day when God's people and God's angels will be eternally together, praising and worshipping God for His glory and greatness and goodness.

God's Glory and our Right Response (vv.7-10)

In vv.7-8a, what should our right response be to the Lord's glory and greatness?
We should ascribe to the Lord (literally "give to the Lord") the glory that He is so deserving. In Rev 5:11-14, we see what this looks like, as the angelic host give glory to the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

In the OT, what else was a right response to God? (v.8b)
It was bringing an offering to God, as prescribed by Moses; a peace offering for giving thanks to God.
In the NT, we no longer bring animal sacrifices, but what offering should we bring? (Rom 12:1)
In the light of God's mercy, we should give ourselves as a living sacrifice; giving ourselves to serve Him.

What else should be part of a right response in the worship of God? (v.9)
We are to worship God in a holy manner, and we ought to revere Him (tremble before Him). Note: Heb 12:28-29 instructs Christians to worship God with reverence and awe. Do we?

Besides all people hearing about God's glory, what message is to be proclaimed as well? (v.10)
All are to know that the Lord reigns, that He sustains creation, and one day He will judge all people.

God's Glorious End-Game (vv.11-13)

Why should creation be jubilant? (vv.11-13) Cf. also Rom 8:18-23; 2 Pet 3:13
Creation should be jubilant because the Lord is coming to judge the earth in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness. The creation is subject to futility and 'groans' in decay, while awaiting the glorious time of renewal, and the glorification of God's children who will dwell in a new heaven and a new earth.

Why is judgment such good news for God's children? (cf. Rom 3:19-26, 4:3-8, 5:1-2, 8:1-2)
Even though we have sinned, our judgment will be favourable because Christ bore our judgment at the cross, so that we could be justified. This has been according to God's undeserved favour (grace) upon us, and by faith in Christ. Not only will we not be judged, but on the last day we will be glorified with Christ.

Consider the sobering passages in Rev 20:11-15, 21:5-8. What are the two paths that people can follow, that will affect whether they can exult on that day or not?

They can either respond to Christ and receive eternal life with Christ (thus rejoicing with the creation at His coming) or they can refuse to do so and incur the severity of God's wrath.

Summary: Let us praise and worship the LORD God with reverence and awe, for His character and saving work are glorious. Let us declare God's grace and glory, that others might be saved.

8. Psalm 121

Aim: To take comfort that the LORD is our keeper and guardian, and for us to cast our soul upon Him.

Read Psalm 121

Why is this a well-loved psalm amongst Christians?

It encourages us. Just as the Lord kept His people of old, the Lord will keep us who are in Christ.

Where do you Turn? (vv.1-2)

When the psalmist is down-cast from the trials and troubles of life, where does he turn? Why?

He turns toward the mountains, for they remind him of the Lord. He created them, and just as the mountains stand against the storms, the Lord can help us stand when we face the storms of life.

Why is it often hard for us to look upward to God for help, when we are experiencing troubles and trials? Of what then, can these verses remind us of, when we are down-cast?

We often find it hard to look to God, because we are focussed on the circumstances of our situation and the difficulties of our problem. These verses remind us to use God's creation to help us turn to Him.

What aspects of God's creation lift your soul to God? [discuss]

Consider Isa 40:26-31. What part of creation does God direct our attention to? Why?

God directs us to the heavens and the starry host to remind us of His existence and greatness. Just as He knows each star by name, and keeps each one, He knows and keeps us, and gives us strength to cope.

In the New Testament, where else should we turn our eyes? (Heb 12:2-3)

We should turn our eyes to Jesus (fix our eyes on Him), so that we might be encouraged and not lose heart.

No Slipping; No Slumber (vv.3-4)

What will God particularly do for us? What does this mean? (v.3)

He will not allow our foot to slip; that is, we will not stumble and fall away from Him and His good ways.

Experientially, we know that there are times that we do fall away, either due to temptation or the trials of life. How then are we to understand v.3? (cf. also Psa 37:23-24).

Even if we should fall, God will always bring us back if we are a true believer. He never lets us go.

In John 6:37-40 and Phil 1:6 in the New Testament what do we learn about us being kept?

Jesus promises to keep us and to bring us home to glory, and God will work in us until the end.

Why can God guarantee that He will always keep and watch over us? (vv.3-4) (cf. Heb 13:5-8)

He is always on the job. He never slumbers nor sleeps. His eye is always on us to help us.

God – the Keeper and Guardian of our Soul (vv.5-8)

What things does the Lord do for us according to vv.5-8?

The Lord is our keeper (v.5), He is our shade and protector (vv.6-7), He will keep our soul (v.8), He will guard our going out and coming in forever (v.8) – what an amazing God who cares for us.

How should we understand v.5b and 6? Will God really protect us from sunburn or moonburn?

This is metaphoric language. Just as shade protects us from being hurt by the sun, the Lord will protect us from being hurt by evil (as v.7 goes on to clearly declare).

What does the language of vv.5-8 remind you of? (cf. Psa 23)

It reminds us of God being our shepherd, who will guard us and look after us.

What does this psalm assure us when we may feel that God is not being our keeper and guardian?

Despite our feelings, God is always there to keep, protect and guide us. He WILL do it (cf. vv.6-8).

New Testament Perspectives

What does 2 Cor 1:3-7 in the New Testament show us? Why does it say that God allows this?

Suffering/trials are a part of following Christ, but our Father will comfort us so that we can comfort others.

Why else does God allow us to suffer with trials and troubles and tribulations? (Rom 5:3-5)

God allows tribulation in order for us to develop in perseverance, character, hope, and love.

How should we respond, and how shouldn't we respond, to suffering and stress? (Phil 4:6)

We should present our requests by prayer with thanksgiving to God, instead of being anxious.

What does God then promise to us in Phil 4:7, and in what context?

God promises His peace to keep/guard our heart and mind, as we continue to submit and trust in Jesus.

How do we know that God has our best interests at heart? (Rom 8:31-39)

God was prepared to sacrifice His own Son for us. So He will certainly do everything to help us.

What troubles you? Have you entrusted the issue to God through prayer, with thanksgiving?

Summary: God is our keeper & guardian. Let us trust Him with all the troubles and trials of life.