

Two Year Bible Trek  
Week 31  
Psalms 1, 2, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24

**Key Concepts:** The key concepts here are that the Psalms are a complex mix of genres which were composed over an extended period of time.

**Psalm Themes:** These Psalms contain themes ranging from cries for help, to affirmation of the Law and its importance, to personal trust in God and to a reflection on God's faithfulness.

**Psalm 1** - This is a Wisdom Psalm, meaning that it reflects a simplistic view that those who do what is right (in this case meditating on and living by God's Torah) will be blessed, while those who do not will be cursed. It also emphasizes the importance of making Godly choices because "the way of the wicked shall perish."

**Psalm 2** - The King is the focus of this Psalm. It has been speculated that this Psalm was used at a coronation of a new king. In it we find several themes including the continuing rebellion of subjugated peoples, God's protection and empowering of the King and the vision that one day all nations shall fall under the rule of Israel (as represented by the King). The word "anointed" (vs. 2) is the Hebrew word for "messiah." The implication is that to serve the Lord means to serve the King.

**Psalm 15** - Once again we come upon a Psalm that is liturgy, meaning part of the ritual worship-life of the people. The liturgy reflects the holiness of the Temple, the place where God dwells. And because of the Temple being the dwelling place of God only those who prepare themselves by living faithful lives (meaning obedience to the ethical rules of Torah) are to be allowed into the Temple. The focus is not legalism (only perfect people get in) but rather on God's call to lives appropriately and lovingly lived.

**Psalm 20** - We return again to a Psalm focused on the King. This is a prayer for the King (the anointed) to be victorious. What is interesting about this Psalm is that while it is a prayer for the King it is clear that victory will not come because of better weapons or tactics but because God will make it so. *"Some boast in chariots, and some of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God."*

**Psalm 22** - This Psalm is one that contains three distinct sections. The first is a desperate cry for help. The writer's life is being taken from him and he cries out day and night. Even though the writer believes in God, the writer's enemies are destroying him. The second part of the Psalm is a pledge to make a formal offering of praise in the Temple if God delivers him. Finally we have the hymn of praise which will be offered upon deliverance.

**Psalm 23** - Psalm 23 is the best known and beloved Psalm in the Bible. It is a marvelous expression of trust in God's care and protection. We hear God described as a good shepherd who guides the writer into right living, even when darkness descends. And when darkness does descend, God, as would a good host, provides sustenance, protection and blessing forever.

**Psalm 24** - We now encounter our third liturgical piece in this set of Psalms. Some scholars believe that it was sung as the ark was brought into the Temple. You can hear the responsive nature of the Psalm. It begins with a declaration about God. This is followed by a question, *"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?"* The response is, *"The one who has clean hands..."* Next we have a declarative section in which the doors of the Temple are commanded to open, *"Lift up your heads, O gates."*

1. How could you see Psalms being used today as part of our liturgy?
2. How do you respond to the Psalmist waiting to be delivered before offering praise to God?
3. How has the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm touched your life?