

Jacob's Well

Lesson Title: Themes in Psalms—Jesus in the Psalms



Key Concept: The Psalms provide an honest reflection of our human nature and the nature of God. The Psalms prophesied of the Messiah and were interpreted by New Testament writers, giving us a fuller understanding of the Psalms.



Scriptures:

⁴⁴ Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled. ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”
(Luke 24:44–45 *New Living Translation*)

“David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s resurrection.”
(Acts 2:31 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Psalm 16; Psalm 110; Luke 24:25–27; Acts 2; Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:13–41; Hebrews 5–7; 2 Peter 1:20–21



Lesson Thoughts:

Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah are often referred to as messianic prophecies. The early church believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah of whom Old Testament prophets spoke. Some of these prophecies about the Messiah are found in Psalms and were brought to light by writers of the New Testament.

After his resurrection, Jesus reminded his disciples that everything written about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled. It was common for the rabbis to quote the psalms’ familiar songs and prayers when predicting the coming of the Messiah. So, although it is surprising for us to hear the psalms used as prophecy, it was not surprising for the people of Israel to hear Peter refer to the psalms on the day of Pentecost. Quoting from Psalms 16 and 110, Peter gave a commentary on the messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus. He explained that David was not writing about himself as the Holy One who would not see corruption, nor was David writing about an earthly king’s

Jacob's Well

future victories, as in other psalms. Rather, David was speaking prophetically of Jesus, the one who was raised from the dead and is exalted. The prophecies of the Messiah that Israel had anticipated for generations were fulfilled and witnessed in their midst through Jesus Christ. Preaching Jesus from the psalms had a powerful impact on the people, and many believed and gladly received his word. (See Acts 2.)

Like Peter, Paul explained how the Jewish Scriptures were fulfilled by the events the Jews witnessed in Jesus. Paul interpreted Psalm 2:7, “You are my Son, today I have become your Father,” as a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. He also used Psalm 16:10 as proof that Jesus is the Messiah and proclaimed that “everyone who believes in him is made right in God’s sight” (Acts 13:39).

The author of Hebrews identified Jesus as the priest in Psalm 110:4, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 5–7 describes the supremacy of Jesus as the great high priest and king whose reign is forever. We understand the connection between Melchizedek and Jesus only through the messianic psalms referenced in Hebrews.

When Scripture interprets Scripture, we have the incredible privilege of understanding its meaning. 2 Peter 1:20–21 states, “No prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding . . . No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.” Until the New Testament writers interpreted messianic psalms as being fulfilled in Jesus, they were sung and prayed in anticipation of the Messiah. The psalms referenced in the New Testament call us to read them both in their original and in their quoted contexts.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Read Psalm 16:8–11, Psalm 110:1, and Acts 2:25–35. How does Scripture interpreting Scripture help our understanding?
- 2) Why is it important to explore why Peter, Paul, etc. quote psalms?
- 3) How can we understand and identify prophecy in the Bible?
- 4) Of the themes discussed in this series, what was your favorite to discuss, and why? (sovereignty, wisdom, lament, repentance, hope, or Jesus)

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- 1) Psalm 110 is the most quoted or referenced psalm in the New Testament. As a study, compare these New Testament references to this psalm: Mark 16:19; John 12:34; Acts: 2:28–28, 34–36; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 5:10; 6:20; 7:3; 8:1; 12:2.
- 2) As a wrap up to this quarter's focus on "Themes in the Psalms," read the book of Psalms as a devotional. For example, make a 30-day plan to read five psalms per day (150 psalms). Or perhaps read a psalm a day and meditate on each one. Have a journal on hand to jot down notes and reflections.
- 3) Suggested study practice: When you see the New Testament reference the Old Testament, pause and do the following:
 - a. Acknowledge its presence in the text.
 - b. Appreciate the author's intent.
 - c. Ask why the author quotes or alludes to it.
 - d. Read the Old Testament quote or reference in its original context.
- 4) Here are some books for further study of the Psalms. *The Case for the Psalms* by N. T. Wright; *Invitation to the Psalms* by Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N. Jacobson; *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* by Daniel J. Estes; *The Essential Bible Companion to the Psalms*, by Brian L. Webster and David R. Beach; *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson.

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections, cont.