

# Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

## First Quarter 2024: *The Book of Psalms*

### Lesson 11 “Longing for God in Zion”

#### Read for this week’s study

Psalm 84; Revelation 21:3; Psalm 122; Psalm 87; Galatians 3:28, 29; Matthew 28:18–20; Psalm 46; Psalm 125.

#### Memory Text

“My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God” (Psalm 84:2, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Day in Your Courts Is Better Than a Thousand
- III. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem
- IV. Zion—The Home of All Nations
- V. Safety and Peace of Zion
- VI. Immovable Like Mount Zion
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The songs of Zion are joyous hymns that magnify the beauty of Zion and the sovereignty of the Lord, who reigns from His holy mountain. These Psalms often praise the merits of the Lord’s house and express a love for the sanctuary that can be found in other Psalms, as well. [...] Zion is a place of divine blessings and refuge. Zion is often referred to in parallel, or even interchangeably with, Jerusalem and the sanctuary, the center of God’s work of salvation for the ancient world.” (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. What does your soul long for the most? Do you sometimes feel like fainting from the intensity of your longing (Psalm 84:2)? Why does the psalmist long to dwell in the sanctuary? What can we learn from psalmist’s longing for God in Zion? (Sunday’s lesson)

3. How do we 'practice the presence of God' in our busy lives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How do we find time for God, make space for Him? Can you testify to the truthfulness of Psalm 84:11-12 in your life?
4. What sentiments do the worshipers associate with their arrival to Jerusalem in the 'psalms of ascent'? These psalms (120-134) were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they traveled up to Jerusalem for the three great feasts. What do they hope to find in Jerusalem? What do they pray for (122:6-9)? (Monday's lesson)
5. Read Psalm 87. What makes Zion such an esteemed place and glorious (87:3-7)? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. While God's ideal was to have one central sanctuary and one main sacrificial site, the historical reality was different. The central sanctuary existed in Gilgal (Joshua 4:18-5:12), Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; 1 Samuel 1:3) as well as in Bethel and Shechem (Joshua 24; cf. Exodus 20:24-26; Deuteronomy 16:21; 27:1-8). So in what sense did God choose Zion (Psalm 87:2; cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-10 & 1 Chronicles 11:4-6)? What lessons can we learn from this history for our time? How can balance be achieved between centralization and faithfulness to God?
7. Read Psalm 46. What reality is poetically depicted here? (Wednesday's lesson) Why would this psalm mean so much to Martin Luther in his darkest moments? According to Ulrich Leupold, "more than any other [psalm it] epitomizes Luther's thought and personal experience" and Heinrich Heine called Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" based on this psalm "the Marseillaise of the Reformation".
8. Read Psalm 125. Both this psalm and Psalm 46 speak about how God protects Jerusalem and will not allow her enemies to prevail. Yet Psalm 74 depicts another reality describing in terrible detail as pagan invaders are tearing the temple to bits (cf. Psalm 78). How did this political reality resonate with people through the long post-exilic centuries when the pagans ruled over Israel?
9. Malachi 3:1 promises, many long years after the Jewish exiles had returned from Babylonian captivity, that God *would* one day return to his temple. Yet, 400 years later, there was no clear sign that this had actually happened.
10. When Jesus finally arrived on the scene, what did he do with the temple? He stopped the sacrificial system, he shut the temple down. Jesus brought the end of the temple's reason for existence. But it was not because God didn't want to dwell with his people anymore (cf. Ex 25:8)!
11. The healing of the blind and the lame (Matthew 21:14 cf. Acts 3) showed that God wants to help his people, even the weakest ones and those on the margin, but in a new way – by creating a community where everyone belongs! In the New Testament, thus the 'house of sacrifice' becomes a 'house of prayer'. People turned the sacrifice into a form of a bribe. Jesus will bring the ultimate sacrifice, not as a bribe to God, but as an expression of God's unchanging love for us. Jesus replaces the house of sacrifice with a house of prayer – not as a new bribe, but as a tool of

hope for everybody! Prayer becomes a tool of participation in what God is doing in our time!

12. Where is the temple now? Where two or three are gathered (Mt 18:20; 1 Cor 3:16-17). How does that fill us with hope and turn us and the community of believers into agents of hope for the world we live in today?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: I hope that everyone has read these first paragraphs in our Bible Reference Sheet, because I think they are so important for the setting. But here in the second paragraph, and in your presentation, you referred to the fact that we will be comfortable with God. You asked the question, “Would we be comfortable, knowing that we are in the presence of Someone who knows everything about us?”

Graham: Even things we may have forgotten ourselves.

Lou: There are no hiding places.

Now, you’ve suggested that we will be comfortable with God, not because God has forgotten all this. And yet God has references in Scripture about how God has taken all our sins and He has put them in the depths of the sea, and He will remember them no more. Wouldn’t it be more reassuring to say, “He has blotted them out and they just don’t figure into any recollection whatsoever”?

Graham: Yes, I think some derive more comfort from the thought that God will be unable to remember, some kind of divine amnesia. And that none of our neighbors and friends, especially our guardian angels, will be able to remember. I think it shows more trust in God to understand that He can remember very well, but He would never haunt us with this memory.

Now a vital reason for not forgetting—the history of the Great Controversy is the history of the evidence upon which God has won that conflict. After He has won it, He will not destroy the evidence, or the conflict could arise again and again and again. And this is why Jesus is pictured as keeping His human form. Remember the wonderful picture of that little girl sitting in Jesus’ lap, and she picks up Jesus’ hand and says, “How did You get this mark?” Will He say, “I don’t know. I’m hoping somebody can tell Me some day”? There’s no point in His keeping His human form if the whole thing has been forgotten.

Moreover, when you think of what would be required, the sins of many saints up there have been recorded in Scripture. Think how many sermons we have preached on David’s sins. In order for all record of sin to be forgotten, all Bibles would have to be destroyed, along with all

memory of its contents. Psalm 51 would have to go, that beautiful prayer for a new heart and a right spirit. You think of all that would be gone.

Lou: But then you're saying these statements about our sins being "blotted out" and "in the depths of the sea," and so on, are God's way of reassuring us that though He knows us that well, He loves us and accepts us just as though we had never sinned.

Graham: We say, "Forgive and forget." Now, evidence for that. My mother knew me very well—as nobody else did. And when I was invited to come to Loma Linda in 1961, she could have come before the Board and said, "You don't want my son. Let me tell you some of the things he has done." I knew my mother would rather die than say such a thing! I knew my reputation was absolutely secure with my mother and with my father. Well, if our reputation is secure with our parents, our reputation is totally secure with God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13 with Lou Venden, "How God Treats His Erring Children" recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>*

Lou: We've had quite a number of questions on this subject. It says something about where real concerns lie. "If God's character is love (1 John 4:8) and God loves us so much (John 3:16), why was pain and death so prevalent in the Old and New Testament? And is it God who will actually destroy man in the end? Or is it sin and Satan that causes destruction? If God does destroy, then is this contrary to the Word?"

Graham: And that is so vital, I couldn't live without an answer to those questions, and one should work on them. But I wouldn't want a nice claim in the Bible. "These questions you will find answered on page 721, one, two, three, four, five, six." Those are just claims. It has cost a great deal to answer those questions.

Now on the violence and so forth in the Old Testament, we know we're all caught up in the consequences of this war, and we bring a lot of this on ourselves, to be sure. And the devil is at work. And there are many verses in the Bible that say we reap what we have sown, or maybe God is disciplining those whom He loves. There are many causes of trouble and difficulty. I'd like to look at them all. I don't expect a neat answer to a question like that.

But the big one, "Will God destroy us in the end?" If all God asks of us is love and trust, and if we don't give it to Him, He's going to destroy us in the end? This would be God saying, "You either love Me, or I'll destroy you." And if that's the way He is, I cannot trust Him. I do not care to live with Him. I do not believe He's that way; but it cost the death of Christ to prove it. And we have to go and watch Jesus die. Did the Father destroy His Son? So the cross is the central answer to all of this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6 with Lou Venden, "Evaluating the Evidence" recorded February 1984, Loma Linda,

California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:  
<http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>

How you define faith and trust enters into this. And we need to read other places. To me, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know Him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that He is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we’re sure *He* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we’re sure *He’s* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we’re sure *He’s* asking us, and not somebody else. Anybody who has such a trusting relationship with God, of love, trust, and admiration, willing to listen, is perfectly safe to save.

He could die just beginning that relationship, like the thief on the cross. He would arise loving, trusting, and admiring that kind One in the middle. He will be willing to listen and accept all kinds of instruction and correction. He is therefore safe to save. But you can’t regard God in that attitude without a new heart and a right spirit. So you are a new creature, which he’s going to mention in a moment.

And that’s what David eventually wanted—truth and honesty in the inner man. Mention honesty, and you remember Micah, Amos, Hosea, they all talked about this. All God asks of us is that we stand humbly in His presence with an honest willingness to listen and let Him do for us whatever needs to be done.

I would add that even though with the passing of time I’m finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense and I agree with Him. I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I’m willing to obey this trustworthy God when He instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. Wouldn’t that be safe? Because He’s proved always to make such good sense in every other respect. And I think that’s what Abraham said to Him. “God, you’ve always made such good sense. But your command to sacrifice the son of the promise makes no sense to me. But I know it will. So God, I’m on my way.” I believe faith says to God, “God, I hear you, and I’ve checked that carefully. It is you. And I am on my way. But as I go, in all reverence, may I ask why?” And that’s how we come to know God. And for three days and three nights Abraham thought that through; and in the end he said, “God, I’m even beginning to think of ways in which you could work this out. I’m not telling you how, but I know you will; because you’ll not contradict yourself in the promise

you gave me about my son. Maybe you'll resurrect my son. Just as you gave him miraculously, you could easily resurrect him. Or maybe you'll provide a substitute."

And that's what God chose to do. And Abraham is cited in Hebrews 11 as one who trusted God, but thought it through. Faith is not blind. You can jump off a cliff if you take leaps in the dark and call that faith. It is not safe. History is strewn with the wreckage of people who leap in the dark and call it faith. Light makes faith possible, and without it we ought to wait. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

Let us draw nearer and nearer to the pure light of Heaven, remembering that divine illumination will increase according to our onward movements, qualifying us to meet new responsibilities and emergencies. The path of the just is progressive, from strength to strength, from grace to grace, and from glory to glory. {HP 105.5}

Thus God is able and willing to lead all who will be led. He desires to teach each one a lesson of constant trust, unwavering faith, and unquestioning submission. He says to each one, I am the Lord thy God. Walk with Me, and I will fill thy path with light.... {OHC 24.3}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,— **Immanuel, "God with us."** {DA 26.3}

Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed. {Mar 363.3}

Every right principle, every truth learned in an earthly school, will advance us just that much in the heavenly school. As Christ walked and talked with His disciples during His ministry on this earth, so will He teach us in the school above, leading us beside the river of living waters and

revealing to us truths that in this life must remain hidden mysteries because of the limitations of the human mind, so marred by sin. {Mar 363.4}

Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {Mar 363.6}

Jesus is ever ready to speak peace to souls that are burdened with doubts and fears. He waits for us to open the door of the heart to Him, and say, Abide with us. {DA 803.3}

Happiness drawn from earthly sources is as changeable as varying circumstances can make it; but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend upon any circumstances in life, on the amount of worldly goods or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail. {MB 16.2}

The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife. {HP 35.3}

But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. {FLB 121.5}

There every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. And still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul. {Ed 307.4}

All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's children. With unutterable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. We shall share the treasures gained through ages upon ages spent in contemplation of God's handiwork. And the years of eternity, as they roll, will continue to bring more glorious revelations. "Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) will be, forever and forever, the impartation of the gifts of God. {Ed 307.5}

He passed no human being by as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself, He presented a lesson appropriate to the time and the circumstances. Every neglect or insult shown by men to their fellow men only made Him more conscious of their need of His divine-human sympathy. He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might

become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them the children of God. {9T 191.2}

All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, ... that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. {TMK 99.5}

As the rays of the sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall extend to every soul upon the earth. {AG 26.3}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

In the person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. {FLB 98.3}

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and He will never betray your trust. If you will ask help of God you need not ask in vain. In order to encourage us to have confidence and trust He comes near us by His holy Word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win our confidence. But in nothing does He take more delight than in receiving the weak who come to Him for strength. If we will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to find an ear to hear and an arm to save. {TDG 194.5}

Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth! When the earthborn children know it not, they have angels of light as their companions. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to draw that soul to Christ. {6T 366.1}

The world is a theater; the actors, its inhabitants, are preparing to act their part in the last great drama. With the great masses of mankind there is no unity, except as men confederate to accomplish their selfish purposes. God is looking on. His purposes in regard to His rebellious subjects will be fulfilled. The world has not been given into the hands of men, though God is permitting the elements of confusion and disorder to bear sway for a season. . . . {8T 27.4}



But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. {PK 570.4}

How graciously and tenderly our heavenly Father deals with His children! He preserves them from a thousand dangers to them unseen and guards them from the subtle arts of Satan, lest they should be destroyed. {3T 373.1}

The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. No one who in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. It is true that Satan is a powerful being; but, thank God, we have a mighty Saviour, who cast out the evil one from heaven. {MH 94.3}

Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim and angels that excel in strength—ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands—stand at His right hand, “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” Hebrews 1:14. {COL 176.3}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. {DA 669.4}

When temptations assail you, when care, perplexity, and darkness seem to surround your soul, look to the place where you last saw the light. Rest in Christ's love and under His protecting care. When sin struggles for the mastery in the heart, when guilt oppresses the soul and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, remember that Christ's grace is sufficient to subdue sin and banish the darkness. Entering into communion with the Saviour, we enter the region of peace. {MH 250.1}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. Seek Him as One who desires to be found of you. He desires you not only to touch His garments, but to walk with Him in constant communion. {MH 85.2}