



**MESSIANIC  
AND  
PENITENTIAL  
PSALMS**

.....  
**ARNOLD G. KUNTZ**

**LIVING WAY**  
BIBLE STUDY

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## STUDY STRUCTURE

### LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

*Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page.* The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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# MESSIANIC & PENITENTIAL PSALMS

ARNOLD G. KUNTZ

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*The real genius of King David, with reference to the Psalms, lies in his composition of them. True, he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit as he wrote, and who wouldn't do well at it given the prime moving of verbal inspiration?*



Seventy-three psalms are connected by their titles with King David. That alone accounts for the Jewish tradition which ascribes this Old Testament Book of Psalms to David, though scholarship connects a number of the psalms with different authors. Bible history leads us to think of King David in terms of a shepherd (1 Samuel 17:34-36), warrior (2 Samuel 5:7-10), lover (2 Samuel 11:1-4), hero (1 Samuel 18:6-7), and king (2 Samuel 5:3).

We are apt, however, to overlook or ignore what was obviously David's particular gift, his talent, even his genius, as a poet and musician. It is obvious that under his influence, the Psalms became an integral element in Jewish worship, an element that perseveres to this day and finds acceptance in Christian liturgical worship as well. David not only authored many of the psalms, but in 2 Samuel 23:1-2 and 1 Chronicles 23:2-5, it becomes more or less apparent that, as long as he lived, the direction of liturgical music in Jewish worship remained in his hands.

But the real genius of King David, with reference to the Psalms, lies in his composition of them. True, he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit as he wrote, and who wouldn't do well at it given the prime moving of verbal inspiration? But God uses the gifts He gives to men and, no doubt, implanted the poet's genius and musical brilliance in David already at birth (1 Samuel 16:18), with full intent to utilize both in the process of creating the psalms and elevating them to liturgical use to the glory of His name.

*You can learn a lot about a person by what he does and feels when he faces his failures and his sins. The depth of David's contrition explains the height of his elation and the breadth of his relief as he ponders and embraces the promise of deliverance in the Messiah.*



Our current study embraces 14 psalms. We confine our consideration to what are termed “Penitential Psalms” and “Messianic Psalms.” There are seven of each. The Penitential Psalms are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. The Messianic Psalms are 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 72, and 110.

At the time when the Psalms were written (around the time of the United Kingdom of Saul, David, Solomon, and the Great Exile), people, generally speaking, were more skilled at and probably more serious about the confession of their sins than we are. We don't much like to confess our sins, though we are less hesitant when it comes to the sins of others. With King David, it's a different story. Nowhere is sin more vigorously renounced than in the songs of this great penitent, and nowhere does his character shine more gloriously than in the attitude he took toward his own transgressions. You can learn a lot about a person by what he does and feels when he faces his failures and his sins. The depth of David's contrition explains the height of his elation and the breadth of his relief as he ponders and embraces the promise of deliverance in the Messiah.

There has to be something better to do with the Psalms than read them responsively in the 8:00 o'clock service on Sunday morning. What do you remember of the last psalm you read that way? And the sole and ultimate answer isn't just to set the psalms to music, though that's been done with consummate skill by the people who prepare liturgies, and by musical geniuses who fashion magnificent melodies and settings which seek to match the depth and majesty of the concepts which the psalms express. King David himself contributed to the liturgical use of psalms going so far as to invent musical instruments to abet their employment (1 Chronicles 23:5).

PERSONAL APPLICATION

PENITENTIAL PSALM 6

*Bless the moments I spend with You, dear Savior, and with Your Word.  
Your Scripture shines to light my way and dispels the gloom and darkness.  
Guide me by my study of Your Word and will. Amen.*

Read Psalm 6 and ponder the following questions.

1. (v. 1) “Do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.”  
What other motive, or what other role could motivate God to rebuke or discipline sinners?

---

How do you relate this to the often-heard complaint, “Why did God let this happen to me?”

---

Give examples in your life that demonstrate how God has turned difficulty, even misfortune, to your advantage.

2. (v. 2) “Be merciful to me.” Make a list of things in your life which call for God’s grace and mercy.

3. (vv. 3-5) “How long, O Lord?” There is a note of complaint here, a boldness that suggests God is remiss in not hurrying comfort and solace along.  
Explain how you think God looks at the psalmist’s boldness, or at us, for wanting to move past our contrition to the relief of God’s grace and forgiveness.

---

For what is he pleading in verse 4?

4. (vv. 6-7) How does David describe his troubled soul?

5. (v. 8) “All you who do evil.” Read Matthew 7:22-23.  
Who are the evildoers in Matthew 7:22?

---

Who are the evildoers in Psalm 6?

Who would fit such a description (evildoers) in our day?

- 
6. (v. 9) “The Lord has heard my cry... accepts my prayer.” The only relief from punishment for our sins and failures and discipline at the hands of God, our Father, is in the action of God Himself. What does God say when you stand before Him, “groaning, weeping, weak with sorrow”? (See John 8:11)

- 
7. (v. 10) “All my enemies.”  
Who were some of King David’s enemies? (2 Samuel 8:1-2, 15:1-12)

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In whom did David take refuge?

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Who were some of Jesus’ enemies? (Acts 4:25-27)

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In whom did Peter and John take refuge?

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Who are some enemies of Christianity today?

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In whom do we take refuge?

- 
8. Our worst enemies are those who say, “Save yourself,” “be good,” “do righteously,” those who look for relief in good works. The psalmist must have read one of the Messianic Psalms at this point, or written one, for he foresees victory over these enemies.  
Who provides that victory and of what does such victory consist?

- 
9. In Psalm 6, what do you learn about the Lord?
-



*Since redemption, grace, and reinstatement is God's purpose, would He not be gratified by the psalmist's impatience to be comforted by His pardon? But contrition passed over quickly can be contrition passed over lightly. Our sins are real, they are ours, and they are serious. God's comfort and forgiveness are most meaningful to those to whom their sin is most real and grievous.*



#### *PENITENTIAL PSALM 6*

There are psalms, of course, and there are psalms. And, there are scholars who are forever compiling lists of various kinds of them. Martin Luther once divided the psalms into five kinds:

- prophetic
- didactic
- comfort
- petition
- thanksgiving

That pretty well covers it. It's helpful, I suppose, to anyone who is inclined to study the psalms under divisions. One classic catalog (and we'll make use of it in our study) pulls out seven psalms and calls them "Penitential" (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). Then, it pulls out seven more and calls them "Messianic" (Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 72 and 110).

It is our intent to study these - not classroom, school type study, but quiet, late at night, under the reading lamp kind of study, the kind that has the psalmist confronting you with his words and thoughts and emotions (there are plenty of those) and relating them to your life, to your heart. We'll alternate them, first a Penitential Psalm and then a Messianic one, etc.

*God is motivated to rebuke or discipline sinners out of love. He portrays the role of a father. God's purpose in the problems that trouble us is our profit.*



A person can't take long bouts of repentance and penitence without the relief, the rescue, and the Messianic solution to the things in our lives, which call for penitence. Neither psalmist or list maker who first isolated Messianic Psalms and Penitential Psalms thought of them as alternating, but that won't stop us from dealing with these fourteen psalms alternately. And, we'll start with Psalm 6.

In verse 1, the psalmist pleads, "Do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath." This is not a plea that God would not punish sinners, but that He would not punish or discipline them in anger. God is motivated to rebuke or discipline sinners out of love. He portrays the role of a father. God's purpose in the problems that trouble us is our profit.

Since redemption, grace, and reinstatement is God's purpose, would He not be gratified by the psalmist's impatience to be comforted by His pardon? But contrition passed over quickly can be contrition passed over lightly. Our sins are real, they are ours, and they are serious. God's comfort and forgiveness are most meaningful to those to whom their sin is most real and grievous.

In verse 8 we read, "All you who do evil." Matthew 1:22 says they are those who point to their own merit and accomplishments, the proud "holy" ones who have never felt the wrath of God or come to knowledge of their sin. The self-righteous, the misguided who look for comfort in their own goodness rather than in the forgiveness of a Father God.

Verse 9 tells us, "The Lord has heard my cry...accepts my prayer." In John 8:11, Jesus tells the woman standing before Him weak with sorrow, "Neither do I condemn you... Go now and leave your life of sin."

In the last verse, the psalmist must have read one of the Messianic Psalms at this point, or written one, for he foresees victory over his enemies.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

## MESSIANIC PSALM 2

The first of seven Messianic psalms points to and glorifies the coming Messiah.

*I pray, heavenly Father, for all who with me are studying Your Word and will. Give them a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit, that they, with me, may have life and light through Your most precious Scriptures. Amen.*

Read Psalm 2 and ponder the following questions.

1. (vv.1-2) How do we know who wrote Psalm 2? (See Acts 4:25)

- 
2. Who in the Old Testament had the right to be called, “The Anointed One?” (See 1 Samuel 16:10-13). Explain.

---

Who do Peter and John, “their own people” and Luke (writer of the book of Acts) identify as “The Anointed One”? (See Acts 4:23-27)

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Who does Jesus identify as “The Anointed One”? (See Luke 4:14-19). Describe the scene.

- 
3. Identify two ways in which you see the modern world “conspire” against the Christian religion.

- 
4. (v. 4) In the standoff between the rulers of this world and “The Anointed One,” who “gets the last laugh”? (Isaiah 40:22; Psalm 37:13)

- 
5. (vv. 5-6) According to Psalm 2, who merits our allegiance? Why? (Psalm 132:17-18)

- 
6. (vv.7-9) In the struggle between the world and “The Anointed One,” who ultimately wins? (Acts 13:33)

- 
7. In verses 10-11, the rebellious rulers are warned. Describe how they, and we, are to serve and fear the Lord (Psalm 9:2; 104:34; Isaiah 61:10; 1 Kings 19:18; 1 Chronicles 16:30).
-

8. The following sequence of questions may be a useful approach to the study of Psalm 2 and all the psalms. What did the psalm say to the Israelites of old? (1 Samuel 7:5-14; Psalms 28:9; 82:8)

---

What did this psalm say to the contemporaries of Christ, the writers of the New Testament? (John 1:1, 18:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:13; Revelation 2:26-27)

---

And, what does this psalm say to us today? (Act 4:23-27; Luke 4:14-19)

- 
9. Which of the following attitudes best portrays the Christian point of view?

\_\_\_ Christians are forever coming out “losers.”

\_\_\_ In all I do or say, I am secure in the knowledge that I am on the side that is ultimately victorious.

10. Discuss instances when you have demonstrated a “Loser’s” point of view, a “Victor’s” point of view.



*The challenge for them and for us here is to exhibit the “victor’s” point of view. That is apparent when we are open about our Christian connection and ready to give confident and joyful witness to our faith and commitment in the face of opposition. We can do it because we know the Victor!*



#### MESSIANIC PSALM 2

The Personal Application questions for Lesson 2 deal with Psalm 2, the first of the seven Messianic Psalms. It is properly termed a “Messianic Psalm,” that is:

- a psalm which points to and glorifies the coming Messiah, the One Whom Christianity has identified with Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of Mary;
- the New Testament regards it as a Messianic Psalm; and
- established by Scripture, as we note in the following paragraph.

First, consider how the worshipers in early Jewish history considered this psalm and used it. Scholarship and, indeed, the words of the psalm itself, cause us to conclude that Psalm 2 was first a Coronation Psalm, and that it was a liturgical poem used at the coronation of a king.

The kingdom of Saul, David and Solomon was not THE kingdom of the world. It was, in fact, quite small and more or less insignificant alongside some other domains of the time and in the estimation of the general world. The early Jewish constituency, however, didn’t think so. They were God’s people. They, with God, stood on one side of the line and the rest of mankind on the other. They were at the center of life. There was one God. There was one people of God. And they were it!

The coronation of a king was not, as far as they were concerned, the exalting of an obscure satrap (governor) to an obscure post in an obscure corner of the world. It was an important and very significant event. One brings to mind the glimpse television has given us of royal weddings or funerals in England, marked by pomp and ceremony, tradition and ritual.

That's the setting to keep in mind as you come upon Psalm 2. It was an important, focal element in a king's coronation. Read it as such and it takes on new meaning. Think, what did this psalm mean to the people in Old Testament days?

Now, however, a second appropriate question is "what did this psalm mean to the people who lived just before, during, and after the days when Jesus walked the paths of Palestine?" When these people thought "king," there sprang to mind a king who was coming, who would free his people from their bondage to a cruel and foreign oppressor, who would establish again the Kingdom of Israel. They thought "Messiah." Hence, Psalm 2 was, and is, considered a Messianic Psalm. The Israelites harbored the view that they were the one dominant and God-favored realm on earth.

The followers of Christ, prompted by the teaching of Jesus Himself (Matthew 11:3-6), eventually came to understand that the reestablished kingdom of Israel, the kingdom promised of old, was not, in fact, of this world (John 18:36) and that the promised king, the Messiah, was Jesus (John 1:41, 4:25-26, 6:14).

If we add one more question to this mix, we will have created for ourselves a most useful approach to the study of Psalm 2, and all the Psalms.

- First, what did the psalm say to the Israelites of old?
- Next, What did the psalm say to the contemporaries of Christ, the writers of the New Testament?
- Finally, what does this psalm say to us today?

For the kingship of Jesus is not confined to the early days of the first millennium AD. Jesus is the promised Messiah today, our promised Messiah. It is not surprising that the New Testament book containing frequent references to Psalm 2 is the Revelation of John. The Revelation, in the symbolic and mysterious language of its writer, contains

an anticipation of the ultimate rule and eventual triumph of the One born to be King.

Revelation 2:27 "He will rule them with an iron scepter."

Revelation 4:2 "Before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it."

The last of our questions, the one that opens our eyes and hearts to the message of Psalm 2 is this: "What does this psalm say to me?"

"Why do the nations conspire?" (Psalm 2:1). The King James Version of the Bible translates that to read, "Why do the heathen rage?" The original language includes the idea of much noise, even clamor. The enemies of God in King David's experience took God seriously enough to rant and rave in opposition to Him!

There was a time in our own nation when the Christian faith was treated with a kind of indulgent mildness, by opponents who seemed to have little regard for its influence. They conspired against the Christian religion by portraying it as a naive effort on the part of ancients to explain what was, at that time, beyond the knowledge of people. They ridiculed Christian standards of morality.

More recently our culture has conspired against Christianity with an increasingly strident voice, opposing public prayers and religious displays as an intrusion and seeking to stifle its expression and silence its witness by legal action. Opposition to Christianity in other parts of the world goes even further, exhibiting the "rage" described in the psalm. Believers in some places today are being forced from their homes, brutalized, and even crucified!

The challenge for them and for us here is to exhibit the "victor's" point of view. That is apparent when we are open about our Christian connection and ready to give confident and joyful witness to our faith and commitment in the face of opposition. We can do it because we know the Victor!