

# Psalms

Week One

## Introduction



And he shall be as a tree planted by streams of waters,  
That gives his fruit in its time.

Psalm 1:3

**Doctrine of the Lord 37.** I have been permitted to run through all the Prophets and the Psalms of David, and to examine each verse and see what it treats of, and I have seen that the only subjects treated of are: the church set up anew and to be set up anew by the Lord; the advent, combats, glorification, redemption, and salvation, of the Lord; heaven from Him; and, with these, their opposites. As all these are works of the Lord, it became evident that universal Holy Scripture is concerning Him, and therefore that the Lord is the Word.

### **Prophets and Psalms 0.**

The things that follow [*in this little work treat of*]:

- 1. The Lord's advent.**
- 2. The successive vastation of the church.**
- 3. The church totally devastated, and its rejection.**
- 4. The rejection of the Lord by the church.**
5. The Lord's temptations in general.
6. Temptation even to despair.
7. The combats of the Lord with the hells.
- 8. Victory over them, or their subjugation.**
9. The passion of the cross.
- 10. The glorification of the Human of the Lord, or its union with the Divine.**
- 11. A new church in place of the former.**
- 12. A new church together with a new heaven.**
13. The state of humiliation before the Father.
- 15.<sup>1</sup> A last judgment by the Lord.**
- 16. Celebration and worship of the Lord.**
- 17. Redemption and salvation by the Lord.**

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: No. 14 is crossed out by Swedenborg in his manuscript and is never referred to in the text. It reads, "The state of union with His Divine," which is the same as No. 10.

Day One: The Beginning of the Psalms

**Psalm 1**

- 1 Happy is the man<sup>o2</sup>  
Who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
And in the way of sinners stands not,  
And in the seat of the scornful sits not.
- 2 But in the law<sup>3</sup> of Jehovah is his delight,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 And he shall be as a tree planted by streams of waters,  
That gives his fruit in its time,  
And his leaf does not fade;  
And all that he does shall prosper.
- 4 Not so the wicked,  
But they are as the chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not rise up in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the just.
- 6 For Jehovah knows the way of the just;  
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
1-3	11	The man who does not live badly is regenerated by the Word of the Lord,
4-5	3	but he who lives badly perishes on the day of judgment,
6	15	for the Lord knows everyone.

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<sup>2</sup> "Man<sup>o</sup>" with the little circle translates the Hebrew *ish*, which means a male. In the spiritual sense a male signifies anyone who is regenerated by truth to good.

<sup>3</sup> AC 6752:4 notes that "the law" here refers to the books of Moses, as nothing beyond Judges had yet been written.

AE 687:6. Here the expressions “to walk,” “to stand,” and “to sit,” are used as following one another, for “to walk” pertains to the life of thought from intention, “to stand” to the life of the intention from the will, and “to sit” to the life of the will, thus it is life’s being. Moreover, “counsel,” of which “walking” is predicated, has respect to thought; “way,” of which “standing” is predicated, has respect to the intention; and “to sit in a seat” has respect to the will, which is the being of man’s life.

Coronis 7. The order into which every man was created by God is that after infancy he may become a man. For when he is born, he is only an external image or form of a man, and at that time less a man than a new-born beast is a beast. But so far as he is inwardly perfected in this form, as to his mind or his spirit in wisdom and love, he becomes a man.

A man is like a tree, which first grows up from a seed into a shoot, and when it increases in height puts forth branches and from these stems, and clothes itself continually with leaves. And when it comes to maturity, which takes place in its middle age, it puts forth flowers and produces fruits. In each fruit it places seeds, which being cast into the earth, as into a womb, grow up into similar trees and thus into a garden. And if you are willing to believe it, that same garden remains with the man after death; he dwells in it, and is delighted daily with the sight of it, and with the use of its fruits. It is such a man who is described in David by these words [in Psalm 1:3].

### Questions and Comments

1. What is the first word of the Book of Psalms? What does this show us about the purpose of the Author?
2. What is the overall message of this psalm?
3. The progression of walking in the counsel, standing in the way, and sitting in the seat pictures a spiritual progression, upward or downward, from thought, to intention, to will. How can we use this tool to guard ourselves from evil?
4. Look for the marriage of good and truth throughout the psalms. One example, in verse 2, is *delighting* and *meditating* in the law of Jehovah. See also verse 5.
5. Trees need both roots downward and branches upward, just as we need “roots” in speaking words and doing works in the natural world, as well as “branches,” reaching up with our minds to receive affections and thoughts from heaven.

*Day Two: David, and the Style of the Psalms*

*David wrote about the Lord while writing about himself.*

Lord 44. He who knows that the Lord is meant by David, may know why David so frequently wrote about the Lord in his psalms while writing about himself; as in Psalm 89....

**Psalm 89**

- 3 I have cut a covenant with My chosen,  
I have promised to David My servant:  
4 Even to eternity I will establish thy seed,  
And build up thy throne to generation and generation.  
Selah.
- 5 And the heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O  
Jehovah;  
Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 19 Then Thou didst speak in vision to Thy merciful ones,  
and didst say,  
I have bestowed help on one who is mighty;  
I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
- 20 I have found David My servant;  
With the oil of My holiness I have anointed him,  
21 With whom My hand shall be established;  
Yea, My arm shall encourage him.
- 24 But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him,  
And in My name shall his horn be exalted.
- 25 And I will set his hand in the sea,  
And his right hand in the rivers.
- 26 He will call to Me: Thou art my Father,  
My God, and the Rock of my salvation.
- 27 I also will make him the firstborn,  
Highest of the kings of the earth.
- 28 My mercy will I keep for him to eternity,  
And My covenant shall be constant for him,

- 29 And his seed I will set up forever,  
And his throne as the days of the heavens.
- 35 Once have I promised by My holiness;  
I will not lie to David:
- 36 His seed shall be to eternity,  
And his throne as the sun in My presence.
- 37 As the moon it shall be established to eternity,  
And as a faithful witness in the ether. Selah.

### *The four styles of the Word*

AC 66. There are in the Word, in general, four different styles. The first is that of the Most Ancient Church. Their mode of expression was such that when they mentioned earthly and worldly things they thought of the spiritual and heavenly things which they represented. Therefore they not only expressed themselves by representatives, but also formed them into a kind of historical series, in order to give them more life; and this was to them delightful in the very highest degree.... Such representatives are called in [*the psalms of*] David, "Dark sayings of old" (Ps. 78:2-4). Moses had these particulars concerning the creation, the garden of Eden, etc., down to the time of Abram, from the descendants of the Most Ancient Church.

[2] The second style is historical, which is found in the books of Moses from the time of Abram onward, and in those of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the Kings. In these books the historical facts are just as they appear in the sense of the letter; and yet they all contain, in both general and particular, quite other things in the internal sense, of which, by the Lord's Divine mercy, in their order [*more will be said*] in the following pages.

The third style is the prophetic one, which was born of that [*style*] which was so highly venerated in the Most Ancient Church. This style however is not in connected and historical

form like the most ancient style, but is broken, and is scarcely ever intelligible except in the internal sense, in which are deepest arcana, which follow in beautiful connected order; and they relate to the external and the internal man; to the many states of the church; to heaven itself; and in the inmost sense to the Lord.

The fourth style is that of the Psalms of David, which is intermediate between the prophetic style and that of common speech. There the Lord is treated of in the internal sense, under the person of David as a king.

#### Questions and Comments

1. We can read Psalm 89 as Jehovah speaking to David, promising that he and his descendants will always be king. Try reading it thinking of Jehovah speaking to Jesus, that is, the Lord's Divine soul speaking to His Human nature.
2. We can see the Lord and His states on earth especially in the psalms. This is something to look for as you read the psalms.
3. Do these verses from Psalm 89 remind you of any New Testament stories?
4. Which of the Word's four styles suits you best at this stage of your life?



*Day Three: The Music of the Psalms*

AR 279:3. That songs were for the sake of exalting the life of love, and the joy derived from it, is evident from the following passages:

**O sing unto Jehovah a new song, make a joyful noise unto Jehovah all the earth, resound, shout** (Ps. 98:1, 4-8).

**Sing unto Jehovah a new song, let Israel rejoice in His Maker, sing psalms to Him** (Ps. 149:1-3).

**Sing unto Jehovah a new song, lift up the voice** (Isa. 42:10, 12).

**Sing, O ye heavens, shout ye lower parts of the earth, resound with singing, ye mountains** (Isa. 44:23; 49:13).

**Shout unto God our strength, cry out to the God of Jacob; lift up a song** (Ps. 81:1-3).

**Gladness and joy shall be found in Zion, confession and the voice of singing** (Isa. 51:3; 52:8, 9).

**Sing unto Jehovah, cry out and shout, O daughter of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee** (Isa. 12:1-6).

**My heart is fixed, I will sing and sing psalms. Arouse thee, my glory, I will confess Thee, O Lord, among the nations, I will sing psalms unto Thee among the peoples** (Ps. 57:7-9; and in many other places).

*Psalms were written to be sung and played on instruments.*

AR 279:2. The reason why “a song” also signifies glorification, which is confession from joy of heart, is because singing exalts, and causes affection to break out from the heart into sound, and show itself intensely in its life. The Psalms of David are not anything else than songs; for they were played and sung, and therefore were also called “songs” in many passages....

AE 326:2. For this reason many kinds of musical instruments were used in sacred worship with the Jewish and Israelitish nation, some of which had relation to the affections of celestial good, and some to the affections of spiritual good, and to the joys therefrom, respecting what was to be proclaimed.... To these was added the singing of songs, which gave form to the agreements of things with the sounds of affections. Such were all the psalms of David. Therefore they are called "psalms," from playing [*instruments*], and also "songs."

AC 8337:2. Formerly in Divine worship many kinds of musical instruments were employed, but with much distinction. In general, by wind instruments were expressed affections of good, and by stringed instruments affections of truth, and this from the correspondence of every sounding thing with the affections. It is known that some natural affections are expressed by certain kinds of musical instruments, and others by certain other ones, and that when a fitting harmony joins in accord, they actually stir these affections. Those who are skilled in music are aware of these things and make suitable use of them.

The cause of this fact arises from the very nature of sound and of its agreement with the affections. Men learned this at first, not from science and art, but from hearing and its exquisite sense. From this it is clear that it does not come from any origin in the natural world, but from an origin in the spiritual world, and accordingly from the correspondence with things in the spiritual world of those things in the natural world which flow from order. Harmonious sound and its varieties correspond to states of joy and gladness in the spiritual world; and states of joy and gladness there arise from the affections, which in that world are affections of good and truth.

From this then it can be seen that musical instruments correspond to the delights and pleasantnesses of spiritual and celestial affections, and that some instruments correspond to celestial affections, and some to spiritual affections. (See what has been said and shown before on this subject, n. 418-420, 4138.)

#### Questions and Comments

1. Of the passages quoted in AR 279:3, which sound most like “exalting the life of love and the joy from it”?  
There are songs in Isaiah and other parts of the Word as well as the psalms themselves.
2. Thinking of the sound of instruments, can you hear how the sound of wind instruments corresponds to love while the sound of stringed instruments corresponds to affections of truth?
3. Would our worship services be improved if we had more skilled singers and musicians on various instruments, both wind and stringed, contributing to our music? (We do have beautiful recorded music.)
4. How do you think it affects our worship that our primary instruments are piano and guitar, both stringed, as compared with organ, which originally was a wind instrument?

*Day Four: Headings in the Psalms*

**Psalm 3**

- 1 A psalm of David, when he ran away from the face of Absalom his son.  
O Jehovah, how are my adversaries multiplied!  
Many *are* rising up against me.
- 2 Many are saying of my soul,  
*There is no salvation for him in God. Selah.*
- 3 But Thou, O Jehovah, *art* a shield for me;  
My glory, and He who exalts my head.
- 4 I call to Jehovah with my voice,  
And He answers me from the mountain of His holiness.  
Selah.
- 5 I lie down and sleep;  
I awake; for Jehovah supports me.
- 6 I will not fear myriads of people  
Who have put *themselves* against me *all* around.
- 7 Arise, O Jehovah;  
Save me, O my God:  
For Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the jaw;  
The teeth of the wicked Thou hast broken.
- 8 Salvation *belongs* to Jehovah!  
Thy blessing *be* upon Thy people. Selah.

*Historical, musical, and topical headings in the psalms*

Shiggaion<sup>4</sup> of David, which he sang to Jehovah, on account of the words of Cush the Benjaminite (Ps. 7).

**To the victor; of the servant of Jehovah, of David, who spoke to Jehovah the words of this song in the day that Jehovah rescued him from the palm of the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul (Ps. 18).**

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<sup>4</sup> A musical notation

**A psalm; a song at the dedication of the house; of David** (Ps. 30).

**Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, and he drove him out, and he went** (Ps. 34).

To the victor; a psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came in to him, when he had gone in to Bathsheba (Ps. 51).

**To the victor; a maskil<sup>5</sup> of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said to him, David has come to the house of Ahimelech** (Ps. 52).

To the victor, upon neginoth<sup>6</sup>, a maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Does not David hide himself with us? (Ps. 54)

**To the victor, on jonath-elem-rechokim<sup>7</sup>, a michtam<sup>8</sup> of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath** (Ps. 56)

To the victor, al-tashcheth<sup>9</sup>; a michtam of David, when he ran away from the face of Saul into the cave (Ps. 57).

To the victor, al-tashcheth; a michtam of David, when Saul sent and they kept watch on the house to put him to death (Ps. 59).

To the victor, on a shushan<sup>10</sup> of testimony, a michtam of David, to teach; when he quarreled with Aram-naharaim<sup>11</sup>, and with Aram-zobah<sup>12</sup>, and Joab returned and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the ravine of salt (Ps. 60).

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<sup>5</sup> "Maskil" means a type of psalm "giving intelligence." See Ps. 47:4.

<sup>6</sup> Musical instruments (see AC 8337:5) that were strummed.

<sup>7</sup> Probably a musical instrument (see AC 8337:5), the name of which literally means "a silent dove in far-off places."

<sup>8</sup> "Michtam" is a Hebrew word of uncertain meaning found in the headings of six psalms (16 and 56-60).

<sup>9</sup> "Al-tashcheth" means "destroy not."

<sup>10</sup> A musical instrument (see AC 8337:5); "shushan" means "lily."

<sup>11</sup> A province called "Syria of the two rivers" (Tigris and Euphrates)

<sup>12</sup> Another province of Syria

**A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah**  
(Ps. 63).

A maskil of David, when he was in the cave; a prayer (Ps. 142).

*Musical notations in the psalms*

AC 8337:5. As by correspondence all instruments signified the delights and pleasantnesses of spiritual and celestial affections, many of the Psalms of David have an inscription, and it is told how they are to be sung, as “upon neginoth,” “upon nechiloth,” “upon the octave,” “shigaion,” “gitthith,” “muth-labben,” “sheminith,” “shoshannim,” “machalath.”

Questions and Comments

1. What does it add to Psalm 3 to think of David praying this way as he fled from his son Absalom? Which verses especially reflect the heading?
2. Can you imagine Jesus praying in the words of Psalm 3 when the hells were attacking Him?
3. Can you imagine yourself praying in these words? Which verses especially?
4. How many of the incidents mentioned in the headings do you recall from the stories of David in the first and second books of Samuel?
5. The Heavenly Doctrine gives the spiritual meaning for the headings in the psalms. How do these references to the stories of David strengthen the psalms?
6. Isn't it cool to imagine the psalms being sung and played on various kinds of instruments to bring out various kinds of affections?

*Day Five: The Psalms Conjoin us with Heaven*

PP 283. **Psalm 33:1-9** A song in praise of the Lord because the church is from Him through the Word.

- 1 Sing aloud, O ye just, in Jehovah;  
For the upright, His praise is comely.
- 2 Confess unto Jehovah with the harp;  
With the psaltery of ten strings sing psalms to Him.
- 3 Sing to Him a new song;  
Strum well with a shout.
- 4 For the Word of Jehovah is upright;  
And all His work is in truthfulness.
- 5 He loves justice and judgment;  
The mercy of Jehovah fills the earth.
- 6 By the Word of Jehovah the heavens were made;  
And by the spirit of His mouth, all their army.
- 7 He gathers together the waters of the sea as a heap,  
Putting the abysses in treasuries.
- 8 Let all the earth fear Jehovah;  
Let all who dwell in the world be afraid of Him.
- 9 For He said, and it was;  
He commanded, and it stood.

*The psalms, as part of the Word, give us conjunction with heaven.*

SS 104. THE PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH WHO ARE NOT IN POSSESSION OF THE WORD HAVE LIGHT BY ITS MEANS.

SS 108. African spirits from Abyssinia<sup>13</sup> were present with me. On a certain occasion their ears were opened so that they heard the singing of a psalm of David in some place of worship in this world. This affected them with such delight that they too sang along with that congregation. Presently their ears were closed so that they heard nothing of the singing, but they were then affected with a delight which

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<sup>13</sup> Today called Ethiopia and Eritrea

was still greater because it was spiritual, and they were at the same time filled with intelligence, because that Psalm treated *of the Lord and of redemption*. The cause of this increase of delight was that there was opened to them a communication with that society in heaven which was in conjunction with those in this world who were singing that psalm.

From this and many other such experiences it has become evident to me that communication with the universal heaven is brought about by means of the Word. And for this reason, there exists, by the Lord's Divine Providence, a universal commercial exchange of the kingdoms of Europe – and chiefly of those [*kingdoms*] where the Word is read – with the nations outside the church.<sup>14</sup>

*Some people in Mongolia who had the Psalms*

SD 6077. THE INHABITANTS OF TARTARY CLOSE TO CHINA – LESSER TARTARY.

There were some from that country with me.... They spoke of the country where they lived, that it was populous, and that they knew nothing about war. They knew of China and of Siberia.... When they came, they marveled that they should be questioned by Christians as to God being a man, since they believed that all knew this, without any question whether it is so. In like manner [they marveled at being asked] about the precepts of the Decalogue; for example, regarding only one wife, whether they live this way, as if they did not know that everyone so lived, since the Lord wills it, etc. They stated that they have houses where they are taught about life and about the commandments of God. They said that they had a book, respecting which people elsewhere do not know that they have it. They called it the

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<sup>14</sup> See also AC 1771, SD 335, 5947, LJ pos. 122; the Psalms with the Tartars: SD 6077, LJ pos. 133



Divine Book; they read it, and are instructed by it and understand it. Inquiry was made, and it was the Psalms of David.... They also possess the Decalogue.

*The psalms are read in heaven.*

SD 5660. HOW MAIDENS ARE EDUCATED IN THE OTHER LIFE AND IN HEAVEN....

SD 5666. Coins of silver or of gold are given to them. These they carefully treasure up, because they are tokens of industry or of virtue.

They have the written Word and Psalters, and they take them with them to the preachings. They likewise read in them; and if they do not read, either some garment is taken away, or the little garden disappears.

#### Questions and Comments

1. SS 104 and 108 show how important it is for us to read and sing the Word, for the sake of the people outside the church as well as for ourselves. People reading and singing the Word on earth provides great delight to the angels, which can then be shared with us. Too bad that our church has lost the ability to sing the psalms. But at least we can read them!
2. It's wonderful to think of parts of the Word being spread all over the world and good people keeping the Commandments everywhere.
3. Can you see the correspondence between the maidens reading the Word and having beautiful garments and gardens?

*Day Six: The Psalms are Prayers.*

**Psalm 119**

- 105 **Thy Word is a lamp to my feet,  
And a light to my path.**
- 106 **I have promised, and I will perform,  
To keep the judgments of Thy justice.**
- 107 **I am afflicted, even exceedingly;  
Give me life, O Jehovah, according to Thy Word.**
- 108 **Be well pleased, I pray, in the freewill offerings of  
my mouth, O Jehovah,  
And teach me Thy judgments.**
- 109 **My soul is continually in the palm of my hand;  
But I do not forget Thy law.**
- 110 **The wicked put down a trap for me;  
But I do not stray from Thy precepts.**
- 111 **Thy testimonies I have inherited to eternity;  
For they are the joy of my heart.**
- 112 **I have inclined my heart to do Thy statutes,  
To eternity, to the last.**

*The psalms are prayers.*

AC 2535. Prayer, regarded in itself, is speech with God, and some internal view at the time of the matters of the prayer, to which there answers something like an influx into the perception or thought of the mind, so that there is a certain opening of the man's interiors toward God; but this with a difference according to the man's state, and according to the essence of the subject of the prayer. If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation (which is manifested in the affection of him who

prays) as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy. It is from this that to “pray” signifies in the internal sense to be revealed.

AR 376. It is common in all Divine worship that, man should first will, desire, and pray, and the Lord then answer, inform, and do; otherwise man does not receive anything Divine.

AC 8179:3. Those who are in temptations, and not in some other active life than that of prayers, do not know that if the temptations were interrupted before they had been fully carried through, they would not be prepared for heaven, and thus could not be saved. For this reason, moreover, the prayers of those who are in temptations are but little heard. For the Lord wills the end, which is the salvation of the man, and He knows this end, but not the man. And the Lord does not heed prayers that are contrary to the end, which is salvation. He who conquers in temptations is also confirmed in the truth stated above<sup>15</sup>, while he who does not conquer entertains a doubt with respect to the Divine aid and power, because he is not heard; and then sometimes, because he slackens his hand, he partly yields.

From all this it can be seen what is meant... that prayer is not to be relied upon. For in prayer from the Divine it is always thought and believed that the Lord alone knows whether it is beneficial or not. And therefore the one praying submits the hearing to the Lord, and immediately afterward prays that the will of the Lord, and not his own, may be done, according to the Lord’s words in His own most grievous temptation at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44).

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<sup>15</sup> “In the combats of temptations, the man ought to fight as of himself, but yet acknowledge and believe that it is of the Lord.” (AC 8179:2)

### Questions and Comments

1. What good-and-truth pairs can you notice in this part of Psalm 119?
2. Psalm 119 has a set of verses for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse in an 8-verse set begins with the same Hebrew letter, in this case nun (which has the sound of N). The Hebrew words beginning with nun in these verses are lamp, I-have-promised, I-am-afflicted, freewill, soul, put, inherited, I-have-inclined.
3. What are some parts of the Word that have served as a lamp to your feet and a light to your path?
4. We can certainly pray in our own words. But have you ever felt a special power when you or someone else has prayed in the words of the psalms or other parts of the Word? The psalms provide prayers for many different states and needs.
5. Have you noticed a prayer being answered in hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy?
6. The Lord often does not answer our prayers as we wish He would, and especially not in the timeframe we think would be best. Why not? How should this affect our prayers?