

An illustration of two angels in a dark teal night sky. The angel on the left is shown from the side, wearing a long, flowing white robe with gold trim and a gold laurel wreath. They are blowing a golden trumpet. The angel on the right is also in a similar white robe and wreath, with their arms outstretched. The background is filled with white stars of various sizes, some with long trails, and stylized yellow and orange leaves and branches. The overall style is whimsical and festive.

An Advent Song

24-DAY DEVOTIONAL

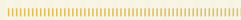
Preparing our hearts for Christmas by
REFLECTING ON THE PSALMS

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® Canada



An Advent Song

This devotional should be suitable for tweens and up, but we encourage parents to read through each day's Scriptures and reflections before you share them to make sure they're appropriate for your family.



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Anointed Son of God

Scripture Psalm 2

THE BOOK OF PSALMS opens with a shout of divine majesty and the first clear picture of the Father and Son as distinct persons within the Trinity. In the face of all human opposition, God asserts his sovereign power and authority, which he shares with his Son, whom he also calls his anointed, or his Messiah.

In the ancient world, being the son of a king wasn't primarily a statement about biological descent. It was a declaration of equal position and honour shared by the king and his son. The New Testament writers pick up on this "begotten" imagery, but they don't associate it with Jesus' birth. Instead, they connect it with his resurrection, as the firstborn from the grave, ascended to the place of equal power and authority with his Father (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5).

Advent celebrates the Lord's second coming as much as the first, and this introductory psalm pictures him as the sovereign judge and monarch who will defeat all his enemies. It sets the stage for the rest of the book of Psalms, God's songbook of praise and worship, filled with messianic allusions and imagery that anticipate the coming of his beloved Son, Jesus the Messiah.

Prayer

Triune God, you are sovereign over everything. As the anointed one, Jesus, you are the King above all kings. Forgive us for the times we forget who you are and when we try to be sovereign in our own lives out of fear and selfishness. We humbly come before your throne and offer you praise. Amen.



Sovereign Son of Man

Scripture Psalm 8

DAVID WROTE SEVERAL PSALMS in which he marvelled at God’s cosmic power coupled with his gracious kindness. He wondered how God, who created a universe filled with stars and galaxies, also takes special notice of humans and cares for us. This psalm contains one of the earliest scriptural uses of the phrase “son of man” as a synonym for humanity.* After the exile, the phrase took on a specific reference to God’s promised Messiah, and it became Jesus’ favourite term for himself.

While David spoke of human beings in general, the writer to the Hebrews narrows the focus to Jesus, our representative Son of Man (Hebrews 2:5-9). Through that messianic lens, the psalm depicts the Son of God becoming human to the point of death – made a little lower than the heavenly beings for a short time – before rising again to his position of sovereign glory.

Jesus tied this psalm explicitly to himself while he was teaching in the temple during Holy Week. When the children in the temple shouted praises to Jesus, the religious leaders were scandalized. The Lord answered them by quoting this psalm to demonstrate that it was right for the children to praise him (Matthew 21:15-16).

*Some modern translations (NIV, NLT, etc.) do not use “son of man” in Psalm 8:4, but the original text uses that phrase.

Prayer

Majestic Lord, thank you for the constant reminder in your creation of your power and your glory. Thank you for giving us this world around us so that we might see evidence of your handiwork. And thank you, most of all, for becoming human to the point of death, to save us. Amen.



Eternal Son of David

Scripture Psalm 89:1-37

WHEN THE ANGEL GABRIEL told Mary about the miraculous birth she was about to experience, the angel also gave her a few details about the boy that she would bear. She was to name him Jesus; he would be great, the Son of the Most High; and God would give him an everlasting kingdom as a descendant of David (Luke 1:30-33).

These were clear markers that Mary's Son was to be the Messiah promised by God. Once Jesus began his public ministry, all sorts of people began calling him the Son of David: a pair of blind beggars in Jericho; a Canaanite mother in Phoenicia; children playing in the temple; cheering crowds welcoming him to Jerusalem (Matthew 15:21-22; Matthew 20:29-31; Matthew 21:9,15-16).

A thousand years earlier, God had made a covenant with David, promising that one of his descendants would rule an eternal kingdom and be called God's Son (2 Samuel 7:1-17; 1 Chronicles 17:1-15). This covenant was the basis for all later messianic prophecies, its implications teased out through the prophets and the psalms, with extensive details here in Psalm 89. All those details come together in Jesus, the eternal Son of David, the ultimate monarch who lives and reigns forever.

Prayer

Jesus, Son of the Most High, we praise you for your majesty, your faithfulness, your righteousness, and your justice. You were the foretold, long-awaited Messiah who fulfilled a promise a thousand years in the making. Thank you for coming to save us because of your steadfast love. Amen.



Promised horn of salvation

Scripture Psalm 132

SIX MONTHS BEFORE GABRIEL APPEARED to Mary, the angel paid a similar visit to Zechariah, telling the priest that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son in their old age. They were to name the boy John, and he would be God's promised forerunner who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah (Luke 1:13-17).

After John was born, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and uttered a prophetic song of praise, partially about his own son, but mostly about the messianic figure who would follow him (Luke 1:67-79). In his prophecy, Zechariah made several allusions to Psalm 132, another of the psalms that reiterated God's covenant with David to raise one of his descendants as the ultimate ruler.

Zechariah drew three specific details from this psalm about the coming Davidic king: he would be a horn of salvation for his people; a light to shine on those who live in darkness; and a rescuer of his people from all who hate them. In the Old Testament, the horn was a symbol of power and light was a symbol of life, both provided by God through his Messiah, who would save his people from all their enemies.

Prayer

Saviour Jesus, you are the horn of salvation, the light in the darkness, and the one who rescues. Forgive us for the times we forget the truth of who you are and give us eyes to see your power and authority. Help us become a reflection of your light so the world around us may know you. Amen.



Everlasting creator of all

Scripture Psalm 102

THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS over all things is the central theme of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. The author of the letter builds his case from the start by quoting psalm after psalm to demonstrate the power and authority of the Son of God. One of his choices, Psalm 102, is a song of lament, in which the psalmist grapples with the reality of suffering in the face of what he knows about God's goodness and sovereignty.

In the end, the psalmist settles his heart and strengthens his faith by reminding himself that God is the all-powerful creator of the universe. For all its vastness and wonder, the cosmos is passing away, and God will one day fold it up and change it like a piece of clothing. God himself, however, is eternal and unchanging.

The writer to the Hebrews applies these words of the psalmist to Jesus, the Son of God (Hebrews 1:10-12). As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is the one through whom God created the universe, sustains it at present, and will transform it at the end of time. Together with his Father, Jesus is unchanging, and his years will have no end.

Prayer

Everlasting God, your ways are so much greater than we can even begin to understand. It can be tempting to be disheartened and discouraged when we look at the world around us, but when we lift our eyes to you, we remember how unchanging you are and find comfort in your constancy. Amen.

Winds are his messengers

Scripture Psalm 104

PSALM 104 is one of the most majestic songs of praise in the book of Psalms, an extended meditation on the goodness and providence of God the Creator. Through evocative imagery, the psalmist portrays the wonders of creation and the cycles of the natural world, attributing all of it to the sovereign kindness of God. Everything in the created order serves God – even the winds are his messengers and the flames of fire his servants.

At this point, the flexibility of the Hebrew language creates some interpretive options. In Hebrew, the same word, *ruah*, can mean wind or spirit, and another word, *malach*, means either angel or messenger. In the Old Testament, the primary function of angels was as messengers of God. The Greek version of the Old Testament, created about two centuries before the time of Jesus, translated *malach* as *angelos*, from which we get our English word, angel.

Guided by the Holy Spirit – who inspired the original psalm – the author to the Hebrews uses the Greek translation of this psalm to show that the angels are just like the winds, subject to God (Hebrews 1:7). Jesus is not only master of the natural world, but also of the spiritual realm.

Prayer

Lord God, you are not only the Creator, but you are also creative. As we look around us at the world you created – from the sun and moon to the smallest birds in their nests – we praise you. Help us to never take for granted the works of your hands and the power of your words. Amen.



All gods worship him

Scripture Psalm 97

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE of a song that praises God as the majestic King over all things, the psalmist inserts a stanza condemning the idols of the nations and declaring that all these so-called gods must bow before the one true God. This is not to say these false gods exist, but rather a statement of their inferiority compared to the God of the universe.

The Greek version of the Old Testament, in popular use at the time of Jesus, substituted “angels” for “gods” and rendered this verse as “let all the angels of God worship him.” Once again, the New Testament writer to the Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit, chose this version of the psalm and applied the verse to Jesus (Hebrews 1:6).

Prophetic passages, especially in the Psalms, typically have two layers of meaning. The first is in the immediate context of the psalmist (in this case, the supremacy of God over idols). The second is fulfilled by Jesus (in this case, by his supremacy over the angels). In both cases, Jesus is the ultimate subject. As the Son of God, he is infinitely superior to false gods, angels, and the entire realm of all spiritual beings and powers.

Prayer

Almighty God, you are sovereign over everything – over the seen and the unseen, over the past, present, and future. This kind of authority can be difficult for us to comprehend – and yet we find great comfort knowing you are in your rightful position of power and we can trust you. Amen.



Tempted by the devil

Scripture Psalm 91

THIS PSALM IS CONSIDERED MESSIANIC in that it foreshadows the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, immediately after he was baptized, the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After Jesus had fasted for 40 days, the enemy showed up and tempted him in three different ways.

In one of these temptations, the devil took Jesus up to a high pinnacle of the temple and urged him to throw himself off. To bolster the temptation, the enemy quoted the words of Psalm 91, that God would send his angels to protect Jesus from any harm. The devil had torn this Scripture from its context and twisted it for his evil purpose, but Jesus answered him with Scripture, "Do not test the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

Jesus triumphed over all three temptations by properly applying the Word of God. In doing so, he remained our perfect sinless representative before God, as well as being our example for how to resist the evil one. In a divine stroke of irony, after the devil left Jesus, God sent angels to serve his Son while he was in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

Prayer

Heavenly God, when we look at the world around us, it can be so easy to be afraid. The temptation to doubt you and live anxiously is a constant struggle. When we read these words of Scripture, however, we know they are true. You are our refuge and fortress, our God in whom we trust. Amen.



Speaking mysteries in parables

Scripture Psalm 78:1-8

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, originally written with a Jewish audience in mind, is packed with references to Old Testament Scriptures which have been fulfilled in the person and life of Jesus the Messiah. When the disciples asked Jesus why he used parables in his teaching, the Lord explained that it was because of his hearers' hardness of heart and unwillingness to believe, which was a fulfillment of a prophecy from Isaiah (Matthew 13:10-17).

Matthew then adds that it was also a fulfillment of the opening verses of Psalm 78 (Matthew 13:34-35). This psalm, along with several others, falls in line with the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament that include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. These books declare ancient wisdom through poetic language that invites the reader to grapple with their deeper meaning.

In this psalm, the psalmist (whom Matthew calls a prophet) declares that he will address his people in parables, uttering mysteries, dark sayings, and hidden things that have been known since ancient times. Applied to Jesus, it demonstrates that he is the ultimate ancient source of all wisdom, the eternal sovereign Lord who conceals and reveals the truth when and to whom he chooses.

Prayer

God of Wisdom, your ways are so much higher than ours and yet you invite us into understanding through parables. Thank you for the gift of storytelling and for inviting us to see the truth through imagination. Help us in turn to invite others to know the truths you reveal in Scripture. Amen.



Cornerstone of God's plan

Scripture Psalm 118

THIS PSALM IS A SONG OF THANKSGIVING, in which the psalmist praises God for answering the prayers of his people, for delivering them from their troubles, and for his continued steadfast love toward them. In light of all these things, the psalmist expresses his confident faith in God, that his grace toward his people will never fail.

However, Psalm 118 also contains a pair of messianic allusions that are picked up by Jesus and the Gospel writers. All four of the Gospels record that when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds shouted, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” an expression of messianic hope taken from this psalm (Matthew 21:8-9; Mark 11:8-10; Luke 19:37-38; John 12:12-13).

Later in the same week, as the Jewish religious leaders challenged the authority of Jesus, he used the cornerstone imagery from this psalm to show them that they’d misunderstood who he was and what he came to do (Matthew 21:42-46; Mark 12:10-12; Luke 20:17-19). Due to the city’s growing rejection of him, Jesus warned them that they wouldn’t see him again until they could repeat their earlier messianic blessing from their hearts (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the foretold stone that the builders rejected – and yet you chose to still come to earth to save us. We give you thanks for your steadfast love – even when our love isn’t steadfast. We praise you for your unconditional grace and ask for your forgiveness for when we forget. Amen.



Falsely accused by enemies

Scripture Psalm 35

THE TONE OF PSALM 35 is urgent, even desperate, as David pleads with God to vindicate him and deliver him from his enemies. Throughout the psalm, David stresses the malicious intentions and false accusations of those who plan to harm him, while pointing out his own compassion and kindness to these individuals when they had need of his help.

These painful experiences in David's life pointed ahead to how Jesus would be treated by his enemies. The Gospels record wave upon wave of attacks by the religious leaders, seeking to discredit Jesus and find some excuse to arrest and condemn him. They accused him of blasphemy, of being a sinner, and of having a demon (John 8:48-49; John 9:24-25; John 10:31-33). At Jesus' trial, the rulers bribed witnesses to bring false testimony against him (Matthew 26:59-61).

Nevertheless, Jesus continued to treat his enemies with grace and respect, just as David had done. Everything Jesus said to them, even when challenging, was for their good, that they might be saved (John 5:34). David, in the face of his foes, committed his case to God, and Jesus did likewise. Rather than retaliating, Jesus entrusted himself to his Father, who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:22-24).

Prayer

Gentle Saviour, you are the epitome of goodness and yet you faced the worst betrayals and attacks – even being put to death on the cross as an innocent sacrifice. Thank you for carrying the weight of our sins and for reminding us, through these passages, of the cost you paid on our behalf. Amen.



Betrayed by a friend

Scripture Psalm 41

THROUGHOUT JESUS' MINISTRY, the religious authorities in Jerusalem kept looking for opportunities to apprehend and silence him. All these efforts had been in vain, until Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' chosen Twelve, decided to betray him. Judas approached the chief priests and offered to hand Jesus over to them for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16).

A thousand years earlier, David had experienced a similar bitter betrayal, which he wrote about in Psalm 41. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, this psalm was also a prophecy about David's messianic descendant. Jesus quoted it as such during the Last Supper, when he referred to Judas' coming betrayal as a fulfillment of this Scripture (John 13:18-19).

Judas' betrayal was not an unforeseen random event. It had been prophesied through the poetry of David and was part of God's plan to redeem his people through the sacrifice of his Son. Jesus knew about it before it ever happened, and had chosen Judas to be one of the Twelve, knowing what Judas would do. Nevertheless, Judas acted freely, according to his own will. This is a mystery of God's sovereign grace that we can only wonder at (Matthew 26:20-25; John 6:70-71; John 13:21-30; John 17:12).

Prayer

Wondrous God, there are many mysteries and unanswered questions we have – not just about the true events prophesied in Scripture, but also in our own lives. Even though we may not understand every detail, we trust you are working all things for good. We trust you with the big picture. Amen.



Hated without a cause

Scripture Psalm 69

PSALM 69 is one of the richest of the messianic psalms, full of prophetic pointers to the events of Jesus' life. Various verses are either quoted or alluded to by Jesus, the apostle Paul, and all four of the Gospel writers.

When Jesus drove the merchants out of the temple, his disciples recalled the verse about his zeal for God's house (John 2:17). After the Last Supper, Jesus explained the reason the authorities hated him was to fulfill the verse, "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:22-25). In the Garden, Jesus expressed his anguish at his coming ordeal and desertion by his friends, prefigured by David's cry of heartbreak and abandonment (Matthew 26:36-38; Matthew 26:56).

All four Gospel accounts note that while Jesus hung on the cross, he was offered sour wine to drink, a detail recorded in verse 21 of this psalm. John's account adds that Jesus told the onlookers he was thirsty, so that the fulfillment of the Scripture might take place (Matthew 27:33-34; Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36-37; John 19:28-30). Years later, writing to the Roman church, Paul quoted verse 9 to show that Jesus was our substitute who suffered for our sake (Romans 15:3).

Prayer

Jesus our Messiah, your coming was foretold for centuries. From the very beginning, you were part of the plan to redeem God's lost and hurting children, and for centuries since you were born, lived, died, and rose, you have been doing just that – saving us, your lost children. Thank you. Amen.



Mocked by false witnesses

Scripture Psalm 109:1-5; 21-31

THIS IS ANOTHER PSALM of David in which he prays to God for vindication and deliverance from his enemies. These psalms share several common themes: David presents the dire nature of his distress, protests his own integrity, calls on God for his righteous judgment, and appeals to God for his sovereign mercy. These overlapping themes create a prophetic portrait of Jesus' experiences.

After his arrest, Jesus was led back and forth between the Jewish and Roman authorities. At each turn, he was repeatedly mocked and misrepresented. The military paid him sarcastic tribute as the King of the Jews, and the religious rulers accused him of blasphemy, bringing false witnesses to testify against him (Mark 14:55-64; Mark 15:16-20).

Once Jesus was on the cross, he was surrounded by a mob made up of Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, and common people passing by, all of whom continued to mock him with taunts and insults. The awful scene had been described by David in this psalm, including a detail that the crowds would ridicule Jesus and shake their heads in scorn (Matthew 27:38-44). Responding with infinite grace, Jesus prayed for his enemies, just as David had done at the beginning of the psalm (Luke 23:34).

Prayer

Lord God, you turned the world upside down with the radical idea of loving our enemies. All these years later, our world is still divided and broken, and we know how desperate we all are for your love. Equip us to be like you – responding with grace and blessing for those who curse us. Amen.



Atoning sacrifice for sin

Scripture Psalm 22

OF ALL THE PSALMS that point to Jesus, this one by David might be considered the most messianic. Together with Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 contains the clearest and most sustained descriptions of the Messiah's suffering and crucifixion. On the cross, Jesus cried the opening words of this psalm, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" to express his agony as he suffered the wrath of his Father for the sins of the world (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

The rest of the psalm offers a host of details about Jesus' crucifixion, a millennium before it occurred: he would be rejected and mocked by the crowd; he'd be severely dehydrated by his ordeal, his bones dislocated, his hands and feet pierced; the onlookers would divide his clothing and cast lots for it (Matthew 27:32-44; Mark 15:22-32; Luke 23:32-38; John 19:17-24).

The psalm even records the words which the jeering crowds would yell at Jesus: "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:43). They didn't understand that Jesus is in fact the Son of God, always pleasing to his Father, the Messiah who became the atoning sacrifice for our sin.

Prayer

Saviour Jesus, you knew the depth of despair you would have to walk through on our behalf. At this time of year, we can get so focused on your birth that we forget why you were born in the first place – to become the atoning sacrifice for our sin so we may live. Thank you for this precious gift. Amen.

Committing himself to God

Scripture Psalm 31



AS JESUS' SACRIFICIAL WORK on the cross was coming to an end, having borne the punishment for the sin of the world, he declared that it was finished. Then he called out with a loud shout, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" After that, Jesus gave up his spirit and breathed his last (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30).

In his final cry to his Father, Jesus was quoting the words of David from Psalm 31. This psalm is a song of faith, in which David expresses his trust in God as his refuge, even in the face of his most profound sufferings.

The sufferings of Jesus were infinitely more profound than David's, but so was his faith. He had endured the horror of bearing his Father's wrath for the sins of his people. It had crushed his spirit and had torn his earlier cry of abandonment from his heart. Yet Jesus knew that his Father loved him with an eternal love, and that having finished his mission, they'd soon be reunited in glory. David's faith was not perfect, and neither is ours. We can thank God that his Son's obedient faith is forever perfect on our behalf.

Prayer

Faithful God, when we walk through trials of every kind, we have a profound assurance that you understand us because you have walked through the worst trials. And yet, even in the midst of that darkness, you trusted in your Father as we also put our trust in you today. Amen.

Unblemished Lamb of God

Scripture Psalm 34



AS EVENING APPROACHED on Good Friday, the Jewish authorities wanted the bodies of Jesus and the two criminals to be removed from the cross before sundown, in order not to violate the coming Sabbath. They asked Pilate to send soldiers to break the men's legs, so that they could be taken away. The soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals, but when they saw that Jesus was already dead, they didn't break his legs.

The apostle John concludes, "For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'" (John 19:36). The Scripture in question comes from Psalm 34, an instance in which David wasn't speaking about himself, but only about the Messiah that was to come.

Five centuries before David, God commanded Moses to institute the Passover to commemorate the redemption of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. They were to prepare and eat a lamb without blemish but were not allowed to break any of its bones (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12). Foreshadowed by the Law and the Psalms, Jesus became the true Passover Lamb, who took away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Prayer

Righteous Lord, when we doubt your goodness, remind us of your everlasting love. Remind us that you are attentive to our cries, you deliver those who call out to you, you are close to the brokenhearted, and you save those who are crushed in spirit. For this we praise you. Amen.



Conqueror over the grave

Scripture Psalm 16

PSALM 16 IS A SONG OF PRAISE and confidence in the Lord and is one of the cornerstones of the messianic psalms, thanks to a remarkable prophecy near its end. As at other times, David begins this psalm with a plea for God's protection, but he quickly moves on to expressing his faith in the Lord and delighting in God as his greatest joy.

As David builds toward the climax of his final stanza, he utters a confident statement – that God won't leave him in the grave or allow his body to experience decay. Given David's joy and delight at the prospect of being with the Lord, one might assume he was speaking here of his belief in the resurrection. However, neither the text itself nor the New Testament will permit this interpretation.

This verse can only apply to David's messianic descendant rather than to himself. In the book of Acts, both Peter and Paul quote this passage, pointing out that David, long dead and buried, was speaking prophetically about the Messiah (Acts 2:24-31; Acts 13:34-37). As the Son of God, Jesus could neither undergo decay nor be held by the grave; rather, he conquered death through his resurrection from the dead.

Prayer

Risen Saviour, we know your birth that we celebrate at Christmas was only the beginning and your death was not the end. We know and trust you are seated at the right hand of the Father, and when we are saved by your grace, you offer us the inheritance of eternal life in your presence. Amen.



Fulfillment of God's Word

Scripture Psalm 40

PSALM 40 IS A SONG OF THANKSGIVING, wrapped around a cry for help, as one might expect from David. Like many of his psalms, especially the messianic ones, this poem is an expression of his faith in the face of adversity. In this psalm, David declares his gratitude for God's wondrous acts of deliverance, as well as his commitment to tell everyone about them.

In the process, David once again writes words that anticipate the coming of his descendant, the Messiah. The writer to the Hebrews cites this psalm to illustrate how Jesus came into the world, according to the Word of God, to do his Father's will, and to offer a superior, eternally effective sacrifice to deal with sin once for all (Hebrews 10:4-10).

On numerous occasions, Jesus taught his followers that everything he did was in fulfillment of the Scriptures and according to his Father's will. He even made the astounding claim that everything in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms – which was Jewish shorthand for the entire Old Testament – was about him (Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-48; John 5:39; John 6:37-40; John 8:28-29). As Psalm 40 summarizes, "See, I have come; in the scroll it is written about me."

Prayer

Mighty God, nothing can compare with your many wondrous works. So often we get distracted in our world and forget to sit in awe of you, but when we step back and look at the whole of Scripture, we see your beautiful plan of redemption and for that we praise you and love you. Amen.



Ascending back to heaven

Scripture Psalm 68:1-18

AFTER JESUS HAD RISEN, he appeared to his disciples and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, that everything written in them pertained to him. He spent 40 more days with them, teaching and equipping them to be his witnesses. Then he led them out to the Mount of Olives near the village of Bethany and was taken up into heaven, disappearing from their sight through the clouds (Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:1-12).

This vital capstone of Jesus' ministry on Earth was prophesied in Psalm 68, a hymn of praise to the power and majesty of God. The apostle Paul paraphrased this messianic prophecy, "When he ascended on high, he took the captives captive; he gave gifts to people," to illustrate that Jesus had come to earth, returned to heaven, and left spiritual gifts for his people (Ephesians 4:7-11).

The ascension of Jesus is integral to the Gospel. It offers concrete proof that Jesus' work on Earth was finished, that he has returned to the place of power and glory with his Father, and that he will come again in the same way, through the clouds, at the end of the age. It enjoys a rightful place among the messianic prophecies.

Prayer

Powerful God, it can be easy to feel defeated in our world today. The darkness can blind us to the truth – that you are sovereign, you are in control, and you are coming again. May we be glad; may we rejoice before you, God; and may we be happy and joyful as we share this good news. Amen.



Dominion over the earth

Scripture Psalm 72

THE SUPERScription OF PSALM 72 READS, “Of Solomon,” but it is more likely to have been written by David for Solomon. In Hebrew, the same word can be translated “of,” “for,” or “to.” In addition, the writing style and context strongly suggest that David composed this song of blessing for his son who was to succeed him as king of Israel.

Although the psalm is never quoted in the New Testament, it belongs among the messianic psalms. God had promised David that one of his offspring would sit on his throne and rule an everlasting kingdom. Some elements of this promise were partially fulfilled through Solomon, but most of it was only to be realized through the coming Messiah.

With poetic elegance, the psalm portrays the character and the reign of the messianic king. His rule would be just and righteous, and he would redeem the poor and the helpless. Kings and nations would bring him tribute and be blessed by him. His dominion would extend over the whole earth and would last forever. These images of the Messiah would be picked up by the prophets after David and would be fulfilled through the present and future reign of Jesus.

Prayer

King Jesus, you are ruler over everything and nothing escapes your notice. While we may struggle to trust you in times of drought, we hold on to the hope of your Kingdom where the needy are rescued, where there is abundance and blessing, and where we praise your name forever. Amen.



Triumphant king of glory

Scripture Psalm 24

DAVID WROTE THIS SHORT PSALM in praise of the King of glory. It was customary for kings in the Ancient Near East to write lengthy odes to themselves, praising their own accomplishments and greatly exaggerating them. David was the greatest king of Israel, a model against whom all later kings of Israel and Judah were measured. Yet he never engaged in this sort of self-aggrandizement. He's not the King of glory, and this brief song is not about him.

Twice in the psalm, David asks the rhetorical question, "Who is this King of glory?" The first time he answers, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!" and the second time, "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory!"

David understood that God's promise wasn't about himself or his son, Solomon, but about one of his descendants in the distant future (2 Samuel 7:19). By the Holy Spirit, he realized that this messianic figure, although physically from his line, would also be God himself. The Lord would triumph over his enemies and enter through the eternal gates of heaven – a picture of Jesus' victory on the cross and ascension to the place of power at his Father's side.

Prayer

God of Glory, you are truly the only good king. You are flawless and without sin. As great a leader as David was, he was not perfect – and you gave him the humility to know this and foretell of the Lord of lords and King of kings. Let us not forget that yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory. Amen.

Righteous and eternal ruler

Scripture Psalm 45



THIS PSALM IS A ROYAL WEDDING SONG written in honour of the king, most likely David or Solomon, to celebrate his marriage to a beautiful princess. While the words were addressed to the king in question, their tone pointed beyond the present ruler to the future Messiah.

The Old Testament prophets spoke about God as the husband of his people Israel, whom he loved and cared for (Isaiah 54:1-5). In the New Testament, Jesus is revealed as the bridegroom whose bride is the church, made up of people from every nation and language. This psalm's description of the bride's beauty and the king's love for her prefigures the marriage of the Lamb at the end of time (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 7:9-10; Revelation 19:6-8).

Digressing from the king and his bride to God and his Anointed, the psalm distinguishes between the persons of the Trinity, speaking of God's eternal, righteous kingdom being given to him by God. The writer to the Hebrews quotes this passage and ascribes it to the Father addressing his Son, Jesus (Hebrews 1:8-9). From beginning to end, the New Testament authors echo the fact that Jesus' reign will be righteous, absolute, and everlasting (Luke 1:30-33; Revelation 11:15).

Prayer

Messiah King, you are clothed with splendour and majesty. You uphold truth, humility, and justice. Your throne will last forever. Out of a deep love for us – your Church, your bride – you were born into a broken world to save it through your death and resurrection. We praise you. Amen.



Divine priest and king

Scripture Psalm 110

PSALM 110 is one of the most frequently quoted psalms in the New Testament, with good reason. This psalm of David, more than any other, unfurls the implications of Messiah's identity as an equal member of the Trinity, starting with the words, "The Lord says to my Lord."

Jesus pressed home these implications to the Pharisees, asking them how David's descendant could also be his Lord. The answer, while astounding, was not lost on them: the Messiah, while fully human, is also fully divine (Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). He's the ultimate king, under whose feet God will subdue all his enemies (Acts 2:34-36; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Hebrews 1:13-14; Hebrews 10:11-14).

He's also the ultimate high priest after the pattern of Melchizedek, a mysterious figure from the story of Abraham (Genesis 14:17-20). Like Melchizedek, Jesus is from outside the Levitical priesthood but superior to it. Like Melchizedek, Jesus isn't a priest by physical descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. Like Melchizedek, Jesus combines the offices of priest and king – in fact, they're the only two people ever to do so, with God's approval. And like Melchizedek, Jesus is eternal, with no beginning or end of days (Hebrews 7).

Prayer

Triune God, you are sovereign over everything and the victory over death and darkness is yours alone. As we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, we also wait with anticipation for your second coming. Thank you for your ultimate plan of salvation and the gift of eternal life with you. Amen.



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