

Psalms

Worship That Never Ends

Lesson #12 for March 23, 2024

Scriptures: Psalm 15; 96; 134; 101:1-3; 104:33; Isaiah 42:10-12; Revelation 14:3,6-12; John 4:23-24.

1. Sometimes, children do not like worship to be long. Will we all enjoy worship that never ends?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] As our experience of God's grace and power increases, we are prompted to ask with the psalmist: "What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?" (*Ps. 116:12, NKJV*). The inevitable reply is to devote one's life to being faithful to God.

In the Psalms, Israel is not simply a nation but "the great assembly" (*Ps. 22:22, 25, NKJV; Ps. 35:18*). **This reveals Israel's primary calling to praise God and to bear witness about Him to other nations because the Lord wants all the world to join His people in worship.** The Lord's people are identified with the righteous, who worship the Lord and whose hope is in Him and in His love.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, March 16.†§

2. Certainly, primary in our prayers should be thanks to God for all He has done for us. And that should include not only our personal prayers to God but also our prayers when in assembly with God's people.
3. Our knowledge of God should permeate every aspect of our lives. We are known to God, and we know God.

Psalm 134:1-3: ¹ Come, praise the LORD,

all his servants,

all who serve in his Temple at night.

² Raise your hands in prayer in the Temple,
and praise the LORD!

³ May the LORD, who made heaven and earth,

bless you from Zion!—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Psalms 134:1-3). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].‡

4. The priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 is repeated in part throughout the Psalms.

Numbers 6:24-26: ²⁴ May the LORD bless you and take care of you;

²⁵ May the LORD be kind and gracious to you;

²⁶ May the LORD look on you with favour [*sic-Br*] and give you peace.—*Good News Bible*.*†

5. As we have seen in the past in places like Acts 17, God is not only our Creator but also He sustains us every minute.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* December 2, 1890, par. 15.†‡ [Compare Acts 17:25,28.]‡

6. Some of the Levites were assigned the job of protecting the temple and providing music for services. Some of these Levites, the sons of Korah, also wrote some of the Psalms.
7. The Israelites were forbidden to worship any idols; and thus, their God was invisible. The temple served as a kind of substitute and a place for them to worship God.
8. God intends for His faithful people to be a priesthood to all around them. This idea is expressed in Exodus 19:5-6, in several places in the Psalms, and in 1 Peter 2:4-5.
9. In a number of the psalms, we are instructed to “sing to the LORD a new song.” See Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1,9.

[BSG:] These psalms summon people to sing a “new song.” What is a “new song” here? The reason for the “new song” is the fresh recognition of the Lord’s majesty and sovereignty over the world and gratitude for His care and salvation as the Creator and Judge of the earth. Deliverance from enemies and from death, and God’s special favor toward Israel, are some of the more personal motives to sing “a new song.” While other songs also praise the Lord for His loving-kindness and wonders, **the “new song” is a special song, expressing rekindled joy and promising renewed devotion to God.** The new experience of divine deliverance inspires the people to acknowledge the Lord as their Creator and King. The common themes in the psalms that tell of “a new song” are trust in God, praise of His wonderful works, and deliverance from affliction, among other things.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, March 18.^{†‡}

10. It is not only in the Psalms where such ideas are mentioned but also in Isaiah 42:10-12; Revelation 5:9; and Revelation 14:3. These passages make it clear that **the new song is praise to God for providing salvation for and to the entire universe.**

[BSG:] God’s people Israel is depicted in affectionate terms as “a people near to Him [God]” (*Ps. 148:14, NKJV*), implying that of all the creation, Israel has the most special status, and thus is most obliged and privileged to praise God. The Bible thus encourages believers of all generations to sing the new song in praise of their Redeemer, which carries their unique testimony about salvation in the blood of the Lamb. A “new song” can depict a fresh song that no one has ever heard before, a song that commemorates a vivid experience of God’s grace in one’s life. The “new song” can also express hope, in which case the newness of the song is demonstrated in the anticipation of the unique, unprecedented experience of God’s majesty in the future. True worship goes beyond sacrifices and offerings and reflects a living relationship with God that is always fresh and dynamic. In a sense, one could simply say that the “new song” is a new expression, even each day, of our love and appreciation for what God has done for us.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, March 18.^{†§}

11. If you were given the opportunity to “sing a new song” to God, what words would you use?
12. Who is worthy to offer that kind of praise to God?

Psalm 15:1-5: ¹ LORD, who may enter your Temple?

Who may worship on Zion, your sacred hill?

² Those who obey God in everything
and always do what is right,
whose words are true and sincere,
³ and who do not slander others.
They do no wrong to their friends
nor spread rumours [*sic-Br*] about their neighbours [*sic-Br*].
⁴ They despise those whom God rejects,
but honour [*sic-Br*] those who obey the LORD.
They always do what they promise,
no matter how much it may cost.
⁵ They make loans without charging interest
and cannot be bribed to testify against the innocent.
Whoever does these things will always be secure.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

13. Notice in this psalm a repetition of many of the requirements originally stated in the writings of Moses. (See also Micah 6:6-8.)

14. What is implied by the idea of *holiness*?

Psalm 24:3-6: ³ Who has the right to go up the LORD's hill?

Who may enter his holy Temple?

⁴ Those who are pure in act and in thought,
who do not worship idols
or make false promises.

⁵ The LORD will bless them and save them;
God will declare them innocent.

⁶ Such are the people who come to God,
who come into the presence of the God of Jacob.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

[EGW:] **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.** Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*^{*} 177.1.^{†‡}

15. God expects His faithful people not only to love and practice holiness and righteousness but also to hate evil because of what it does to God's children.

16. Just as the ancient children of Israel were expected to bring a perfect sacrifice without blemish, God expects us to come now as far as possible in completeness, even perfection, into His presence. We are to come in blamelessness and righteousness. His final welcome will come only to those who have a close relationship with God.

17. Are we making conscious choices every day to avoid the evil and associate with and practice the right? What kind of things separate us from God?

[BSG:] “A perfect heart” is the worshiper’s greatest quality before God. The Hebrew *tamim*, “perfect,” conveys the notion of “completeness” and “wholeness.” A “perfect” vine is whole, undamaged, and healthy (*Ezek. 15:5*). Animals offered as sacrifices had to be *tamim*, or without blemish (*Lev. 22:21–24*). “Perfect” speech is entirely truthful (*Job 36:4*). A “perfect heart” thus is a “pure heart” (*Pss. 24:4*) or a heart of integrity (*Pss. 15:2*). It seeks God (*Pss. 24:6*) and is restored by God’s forgiveness (*Pss. 51:2–10*). A blameless life springs from the acknowledgment of God’s grace and His righteousness. Divine grace inspires and enables God’s servants to live in the fear of the Lord, which means to live in unhindered fellowship with God and in submission to His Word. A testimony of a devoted and pious life brings praise to God and not to one’s own self. Notice that most requirements in Psalm 15 are given in negative terms (*Pss. 15:3–5*). **This is not about earning God’s favor but about avoiding the things that would separate us from God.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, March 19.†‡§

18. It is important to notice that **doing God’s will involves more than performing some righteous acts. It also involves avoiding evil actions.**
19. Psalm 96 talks about many different aspects of worship of which we should be aware. For example: He has saved us; He created us; He will be our Judge in the end.

Psalm 96:1-13: ¹ Sing a new song to the LORD!

Sing to the LORD, all the world!

² Sing to the LORD, and praise him!

Proclaim every day the good news that **he has saved us.**

³ Proclaim his glory to the nations,

his mighty deeds to all peoples.

⁴ The LORD is great and is to be highly praised;

he is to be honoured [*sic-Br*] more than all the gods.

⁵ **The gods of all other nations are only idols,**

but the LORD created the heavens.

⁶ Glory and majesty surround him;

power and beauty fill his Temple....

¹⁰ **Say to all the nations, “The LORD is king!**

The earth is set firmly in place and cannot be moved;

he will judge the peoples with justice.”

¹¹ Be glad, earth and sky!

Roar, sea, and every creature in you;

¹² be glad, fields, and everything in you!

The trees in the woods will shout for joy

¹³ when the LORD comes to rule the earth.

He will rule the peoples of the world

with justice and fairness.—*Good News Bible.*†‡*

[BSG:] Worship includes singing to the Lord (*Ps. 96:1, 2*), praising His name (*Ps. 96:2*), proclaiming His goodness and greatness (*Ps. 96:3, 4*), and bringing gifts to His temple (*Ps. 96:8*). In addition to these familiar traits of worship, Psalm 96 highlights one not so obvious aspect of worship—the evangelical dimension in proclaiming the Lord’s kingdom to other peoples (*Ps. 96:2, 3, 10*). Yet, singing, praising, bringing gifts, and proclaiming the gospel are not separate actions but are varied expressions of worship. The proclamation of God’s salvation to all nations gives substance to praise and content to worship. Notice how the reasons for worship coincide with the message proclaimed to other peoples: “for the LORD is great” (*Ps. 96:4*), “for all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (*Ps. 96:5, NKJV*), “ ‘the LORD reigns’ ” (*Ps. 96:10, NKJV*), and “for He is coming to judge the earth” (*Ps. 96:13, NKJV*). Thus, the goal of evangelism is to unite other peoples with God’s people, and ultimately the whole creation in the worship of the Lord (*Ps. 96:11–13*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, March 20.†§

20. Remember that, as we have studied, **God’s judgment is not only in condemnation of the wicked but also is in reward of the righteous. God’s ultimate goal is the restoration of order, peace, and harmony throughout the universe.**
21. What similarities do you see in the three angels’ messages and the message of Psalm 96?
22. Unfortunately, there are people who have brought sacrifices to God which were not acceptable. When does that happen? Why would it happen?

Psalm 40:6-8: ⁶ You do not want sacrifices and offerings;
you do not ask for animals burnt whole on the altar
or for sacrifices to take away sins.
Instead, you have given me ears to hear you,
⁷ and so I answered, “Here I am;
your instructions for me are in the book of the Law.
⁸ How I love to do your will, my God!
I keep your teaching in my heart.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Psalm 50:8-23: ⁸ “I do not reprimand you because of your sacrifices
and the burnt offerings you always bring me.
⁹ And yet I do not need bulls from your farms
or goats from your flocks;
¹⁰ all the animals in the forest are mine
and the cattle on thousands of hills.
¹¹ All the wild birds are mine
and all living things in the fields.
¹² “If I were hungry, I would not ask you for food,
for the world and everything in it is mine....
¹⁴ **Let the giving of thanks be your sacrifice to God,**
and give the Almighty all that you promised.

¹⁵ Call to me when trouble comes;

I will save you,
and you will praise me.”

¹⁶ But God says to the wicked,

“Why should you recite my commandments?

Why should you talk about my covenant?

¹⁷ You refuse to let me correct you;

you reject my commands....

²¹ “You have done all this, and I have said nothing,

so you thought that I was like you.

But now I reprimand you

and make the matter plain to you.

²² “Listen to this, you that ignore me,

or I will destroy you,

and there will be no one to save you.

²³ **Giving thanks is the sacrifice that honours [sic-Br] me,
and I will surely save all who obey me.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

Psalm 51:16-19: ¹⁶ **You do not want sacrifices,**

or I would offer them;

you are not pleased with burnt offerings.

¹⁷ My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God;

you will not reject a humble and repentant heart.

¹⁸ O God, be kind to Zion and help her;

rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Then you will be pleased with proper sacrifices

and with our burnt offerings;

and bulls will be sacrificed on your altar.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

23. God was not complaining about the sacrifices *per se*. Instead, **He was complaining about the attitude of the people who brought the sacrifices. Are we ready for God’s changes?**

[BSG:] Like the prophets, the psalmists decry various misuses of worship. Their main point in these verses is not the Lord’s aversion to Israel’s sacrifices and festivals but the reasons for such repugnance: the fatal distance between worship and spirituality.

God is not rebuking His people for their sacrifices and burnt offerings but for their wickedness and acts of injustice that they had done in their personal lives (*Ps. 50:8, 17–21*). The Psalms are not preaching against sacrifice and worship but **against vain sacrifice and empty worship**, demonstrated in the unrighteousness of these worshipers.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Thursday, March 21.^{†‡§}

24. As can be seen so often from the Old Testament, the ritual offering of sacrifices becomes nothing more than a useless waste of time. If praising God and offering the appropriate sacrifices does not bring us closer to His will, the whole exercise is worthless.

[BSG:] When the unity between the outward expression of worship and the correct inner motivation for worship falls apart, rituals usually become more important in and of themselves than does the actual experience of drawing close to God. That is, the forms of worship become an end in themselves as opposed to the God whom those rituals are supposed to point to and to reveal.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, March 21.‡

25. What was the relationship between true repentance resulting in a right relationship with God and the offering of animal sacrifices? Would you be willing to kill a lamb as a sacrifice?
26. So, what should we have learned from this lesson which applies to us as Adventists today?

[EGW:] **Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it.** We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.

There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. **They lament the suffering rather than the sin.** Such was the grief of **Esau** when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever. **Balaam**, terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with drawn sword, acknowledged his guilt lest he should lose his life; but there was no genuine repentance for sin, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil. **Judas Iscariot**, after betraying his Lord, exclaimed, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” Matthew 27:4.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 23.2-24.0.†‡

[EGW:] Although God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet He honors with His presence the assemblies of His people. He has promised that when they come together to seek Him, to acknowledge their sins, and to pray for one another, He will meet with them by His Spirit. But those who assemble to worship Him should put away every evil thing. Unless they worship Him in spirit and truth and in the beauty of holiness, their coming together will be of no avail. Of such the Lord declares, “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.” Matthew 15:8, 9. Those who worship God must worship Him “in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” John 4:23.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 50.4.‡

[BSG]: **What is the worshiper’s greatest offering to God** (*Ps. 40:6–10; Rom. 12:1, 2*)?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, March 22.†§

Psalm 40:9-10: ⁹ In the assembly of all your people, LORD,
I told the good news that you save us.

You know that I will never stop telling it.

¹⁰ I have not kept the news of salvation to myself;

I have always spoken of your faithfulness and help.

In the assembly of all your people I have not been silent about your loyalty and constant love.—*Good News Bible*.*

Romans 12:1-2: ¹ So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you: **offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.** ²Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.—*Good News Bible*.*[†] **[What kind of sacrifices did Paul see as he grew up?]**[‡]

[EGW:] His service should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 103.2.[‡]

[BSG:] How can worship of the Lord become a pleasure?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, March 22.[‡] [Even for children?][‡]

27. The “key text” for this lesson about worship is **Psalm 104:33**.

Psalm 104:33: I will sing to the LORD all my life;

as long as I live I will sing praises to my God.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Worship may be summarized as follows: the response of the creature to the gifts of the Creator. Two Bible truths are evident in this abstract:

First, God has given many blessings to humanity. These gifts should awaken gratitude in the human heart for the greatness of God’s love so that we may unite with the psalmist in proclaiming “with the voice of thanksgiving” all of His “wondrous works” (*Ps. 26:7, NKJV*). The psalmist’s ardor for blazoning to others the greatness of God reminds us that worship has an evangelical dimension. Thus, as a church, we should proclaim to the world the Lord’s deeds for every individual and His divine mercy.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 158.^{†§}

Psalm 26:7: I sing a hymn of thanksgiving

and tell of all your wonderful deeds.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] **Second, human beings are hardwired with an inborn predisposition to respond to God’s wonders.** In response to divine grace, we should bow with a grateful heart, submitting everything in our lives to the will of our Creator and Redeemer. [What would happen if everyone did that?]

Worship should come from the heart. At the same time, the book of Psalms instructs us that worship should not be conducted capriciously. There are appropriate ways to revere the Lord. Keeping a wise balance between gratitude and reverent submission will make our worship enjoyable and unifying.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 158.^{†‡}

28. Psalms is about how we worship God. Psalms talks about our worship, how it should be conducted, and to whom it should be offered. There are times when psalms were written under very difficult situations.

Psalm 3:1-8: ¹ I have so many enemies, LORD,
 so many who turn against me!
² They talk about me and say,
 “God will not help him.”
³ But you, O LORD, are always my shield from danger;
 you give me victory
 and restore my courage.
⁴ I call to the LORD for help,
 and from his sacred hill he answers me.
⁵ I lie down and sleep,
 and all night long the LORD protects me.
⁶ I am not afraid of the thousands of enemies
 who surround me on every side.
⁷ Come, LORD! Save me, my God!
 You punish all my enemies
 and leave them powerless to harm me.
⁸ Victory comes from the LORD—
 may he bless his people.—*Good News Bible*.*

29. Many of the Psalms are obviously personal prayers or laments. These can be offered to God at any time and from any location. See, for example, Psalm 9, 10, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 92, 107, 116, and 138. Pick out a Psalm that parallels your experience, and pray it to God!
30. But, for church worship to be ideal, every participant should be committed to serving God.

Psalm 4:3-4: ³ Remember that the LORD has chosen the righteous for his own,
 and he hears me when I call to him.
⁴ Tremble with fear and stop sinning;
 think deeply about this,
 when you lie in silence on your beds.—*Good News Bible*.*

31. We have studied Psalm 22 in the past for its prophetic details of the experiences of Jesus Christ. But, this Psalm also talks about praising God in the assembly.

Psalm 22:22-31: ²² I will tell my people what you have done;
 I will praise you in their assembly....
²⁵ In the full assembly I will praise you for what you have done;
 in the presence of those who worship you
 I will offer the sacrifices I promised....
²⁷ **All nations will remember the LORD.**
From every part of the world they will turn to him;
all races will worship him.
²⁸ **The LORD is king,**
and he rules the nations.

29 All proud people will bow down to him;

all mortals will bow down before him.

30 Future generations will serve him;

they will speak of the Lord [sic] [Adonai] to the coming generation.

31 People not yet born will be told:

“The Lord [sic] [Adonai] saved his people.”—Good News Bible.*†‡

32. After carefully reading Psalm 22, it should be impossible for us to think that it is acceptable for us to worship only by ourselves at home. There also must be group worship.
33. Psalms 146-150 focus particularly on praises to God. God delights in those who honor Him and those who trust in His constant love. (Psalm 147:11)

[BSG:] The verb *halal* (Hebrew “to praise”) is used more than 30 times in Psalms 146–150, and each usage is related to God Himself. Our reasons for praising the Lord, as given in these psalms, are manifold. The Lord is our help and hope (*Ps. 146:5*); He is Creator and Sustainer (*Ps. 146:6; Ps. 147:4, 8, 9, 16–19*); He defends and delivers the needy and the oppressed (*Ps. 149:7–9; Ps. 147:2, 3*); He sustains the humble and punishes the wicked (*Ps. 147:6, Ps. 149:5*); He provides for the needs of His people (*Ps. 147:14, Ps. 146:7–9*); and He reigns forever (*Ps. 146:10*). Psalm 148:13 summarizes the preeminent reason for our worship and praise of God: “For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven” (*NKJV*). The Lord is the only God there is, and He is worthy of praise because of His “excellent greatness” (*Ps. 150:2, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 159-160.†‡§

[BSG:] A final topic for consideration in Psalms 146 to 150 is the use of live instruments in our devotion. Seven instruments are mentioned in these final psalms: (1) harp (*Ps. 147:7, Ps. 149:3, Ps. 150:3*), (2) timbrel (*Ps. 149:3, Ps. 150:4*), (3) trumpet and (4) lute (*Ps. 150:3*), (5) stringed instruments and (6) flutes (*Ps. 150:4*), and (7) “loud . . . clashing” cymbals (*Ps. 150:5*). Worship requires that we bring God our best gifts, and the area of music is no exception.... Along these lines, parents would do well to encourage their children to learn to play a musical instrument and to sing. We should do all we can to facilitate the use of different kinds of instruments in our worship service. Ultimately, **the focus of all the music in our worship service should be to exalt our Savior.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 160-161.†‡§

34. **A very useful exercise for each one of us would be to practice praying the Psalms.** Open the Bible and kneel down before your bed or in an appropriate location and read/pray a Psalm which seems appropriate for your current situation. This should be done clearly with the idea of submission to God’s will and in praise of what He has done.

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Email: Info@theox.org