

Psalms

I Will Arise

Lesson #6 for February 10, 2024

Scriptures: Psalm 82; 12:5; 18:3-18; 41:1-3; 96:6-10; 99:1-4; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Romans 8:34.

1. What should we do about social injustice? Should we be helping the poor and oppressed?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Our age is not the only age in which evil, injustice, and oppression rage. The psalmists lived in such a time, as well. And so, whatever else they are, the Psalms are also God's protests against the violence and oppression in the world, in our world, and that of the psalmists, as well.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, February 3.‡

[BSG:] **Mosaic law commands God's people to take special care of three groups of people: "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow"** (*Deut. 10:18, Deut. 14:29; Deut. 16:11, 14; Deut. 24:17–20; Deut. 26:12, 13; Deut. 27:19*). Usually, these people didn't have a source of stable income; many times they often didn't own land that could be worked or tilled to sustain their families. Ideally, these fringe citizens and immigrants sought to find places where they could hire out their services or, at the very least, be permitted to gather the leftover fruits and sheaves behind the harvesters (*see Ruth 2:6–8*). Such persons didn't have familial protection. Given their vulnerability, we can see how the abuse of widows, orphans, and strangers was considered one of the worst sins in society during Old Testament times. The prophets regularly admonished the people to provide for this underprivileged class (*Isa. 1:17, 23; Jer. 7:6; Jer. 22:3; Ezek. 22:7; Zech. 7:10*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 80.†§ [Do we have any problems like that in our day?][†]

2. ***Should we blame the Devil for this problem? What could we possibly do about it? What is God waiting for? (See Evangelism 694-697.)***
3. The final end of the great controversy has never been in doubt. God's judgment will come upon the entire world, and every single person will be judged. We have no idea when that end will come. It will come in God's time, not in ours.
4. We will never solve all the social issues in our world by our human efforts. But, there are special groups that need our special attention.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 633.3-634.0 [1898]; *Evangelism** 696.4.††

- 2 **Peter 3:11-13:** ¹¹Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, ¹²as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon—the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. ¹³But **we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation**

(2nd ed., 2 Peter 3:11-13). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*.]†‡

Psalm 96:13: When the LORD comes to rule the earth.

He will rule the peoples of the world

with justice and fairness.—*Good News Bible*.*† [Is that true today?]‡

5. We know that God's judgment will be perfectly fair to everyone. In fact, each one of us will, in effect, judges himself/herself. We will recognize that by the choices we have made and by the way we have lived, we have placed ourselves either on God's side or on Satan's side.
6. Every person who has ever lived will face the final judgment before God. While the Devil is busy accusing us, Jesus is defending us; but, He cannot lie about us or our behavior. (Zechariah 3:1-5) The entire universe is watching with bated breath to see what the outcome will be. (Daniel 7:9-10) God's judgment will be absolutely fair. In fact, **ultimately, each one of us will choose for ourselves which side we want to be on!**
7. It is in this life that we prepare for the future life. The wicked and rebellious people are preparing for God's judgment. Entrance to heaven is self-selected!

[EGW:] **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them [the wicked] for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. [Why would that be?] They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 542.2-543.0.†‡

8. Even the Devil will receive the reward that he has chosen for himself.

[EGW:] **Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 670.2.†‡ [See Philipians 2:5-11.]‡

9. ***Do our lives demonstrate clearly which side we have chosen for ourselves? Have we chosen God's side?***
10. As we have mentioned in earlier lessons, God's government not only punishes the sinners, but **also it rewards the righteous**. There is a twofold aspect of divine judgment.

Psalm 7:10-17: ¹⁰ God is my protector;

he saves those who obey him.

¹¹ God is a righteous judge

and always condemns the wicked....

¹⁴ See how wicked people think up evil;

they plan trouble and practice deception.

¹⁵ But in the traps they set for others,
they themselves get caught.

¹⁶ So they are punished by their own evil
and are hurt by their own violence.

¹⁷ I thank the LORD for his justice,

I sing praises to the LORD, the Most High.—*Good News Bible*.*

Romans 6:23: For sin pays its wage—death; but God’s free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Good News Bible*.*†

11. Think of what a relief it will be for God to eliminate social injustice!

12. Some Christians have a hard time recognizing God’s condemnation of the wicked as an action of His loving character. Notice what one of the psalmists said about this.

Psalm 18:8-12: ⁸ Smoke poured out of his nostrils,
a consuming flame and burning coals from his mouth.

⁹ He tore the sky apart and came down
with a dark cloud under his feet.

¹⁰ He flew swiftly on a winged creature;
he travelled on the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He covered himself with darkness;
thick clouds, full of water, surrounded him.

¹² Hailstones and flashes of fire
came from the lightning before him
and broke through the dark clouds.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] These hymns [psalms] praise the Lord for His awesome power over the evil forces that threaten His people. They portray God in His majesty as Warrior and Judge. The image of God as Warrior is frequent in the Psalms and highlights the severity and urgency of God’s response to His people’s cries and suffering....

Although David states that the Lord trains his hands for war (*Ps. 18:34*), nowhere in the Psalms does he rely on his battle skills. Instead, the Lord fights for David and delivers him (*Ps. 18:47, 48*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, February 4.†§

13. David considered God as his only real weapon, more powerful than any other force on his side as he faced his enemies. **At times, the Bible presents God as a warrior.**

[BSG:] There is a powerful metaphor about God in the Old Testament and, to a lesser degree, in the New, which is not too popular among Christians nowadays: God as a warrior. Such an idea may be too harsh or militaristic to a culture that prefers the expressions of God’s love, mercy, inclusion, and peace. The “LORD of hosts” (*Josh. 5:14, 1 Sam [sic] 1:11, 1 Sam. 4:4, 1 Sam. 17:45, 2 Sam. 7:26, Jer. 10:16, Jer. 31:35, Jer. 32:18, Amos 5:16, etc.*) is a common representation of God’s character. It depicts the Creator as a general of the heavenly armies. **He is involved in conflict against evil powers.** But the

Word of God also describes Him as a warrior. “**The LORD is a warrior**” (*Exod. 15:3, NIV; He is a “man of war,” NKJV*); “The LORD marches out like a warrior” (*Isa. 42:13, ISV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 81.†‡§

Exodus 15:3: The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.—*Good News Bible*.*

Isaiah 42:13: The LORD goes out to fight like a warrior; he is ready and eager for battle. He gives a war cry, a battle shout; he shows his power against his enemies.—*Good News Bible*.*

Jeremiah 32:18: You have shown constant love to thousands, but you also punish people for the sins of their parents. You are a great and powerful God; you are the LORD Almighty.—*Good News Bible*.*

14. How do you feel about a God who trains His friends for war? David was not only a skillful musician and writer of psalms, but he was also a skilled warrior. He repeatedly praised God as his only deliverer and sustainer. (Psalm 144:10-15)
15. Was it wrong for David to credit God and praise Him for giving him victories in battle? Don't we need to give God full credit for anything that we accomplish because He created us and sustains us in everything we do?
16. Starting in the writings of Moses, we find many places where God instructs His people to care for the widows, the orphans, and the foreigners. See, for example:

Psalm 146:6-10: ⁶ The Creator of heaven, earth, and sea, and all that is in them.

He always keeps his promises;

⁷ **he judges in favour [sic-Br] of the oppressed**

and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free

⁸ and gives sight to the blind.

He lifts those who have fallen;

he loves his righteous people.

⁹ He protects the strangers who live in our land;

he helps widows and orphans,

but takes the wicked to their ruin.

¹⁰ The LORD is king for ever [sic-Br].

Your God, O Zion, will reign for all time.

Praise the LORD!—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

17. God exhibits special care and concern for justice regarding the various vulnerable groups of people, including the poor, needy, oppressed, fatherless, widows, widowers, and strangers. The Psalms, like the Law and the Prophets, are clear on that point. (See Exodus 22:21–27; Isaiah 3:13-15.)

18. Notice some of the passages in the writings of Moses that direct God's people very carefully to care for these groups.

Exodus 22:21-27: ²¹ "Do not ill-treat or oppress a foreigner; remember that you were foreigners in Egypt. ²²Do not ill-treat any widow or orphan. ²³If you do, I, the LORD, will answer them when they cry out to me for help, ²⁴and **I will be angry and kill you in war.** Your wives will become widows, and your children will be fatherless.

²⁵ "If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender and require him to pay interest. ²⁶If you take someone's cloak as a pledge that he will pay you, you must give it back to him before the sun sets, ²⁷because it is the only covering he has to keep him warm. What else can he sleep in? When he cries out to me for help, I will answer him because I am merciful."—*Good News Bible*.*†

19. While God very specifically told the children of Israel to care for the poor and needy among their own, **He also instructed them to care for foreigners** who were in trouble.
20. We need to recognize that the "poor and needy" are not just people who are suffering from material poverty. But also, those are people who may be vulnerable and helpless. God's compassion extends to all of His children throughout the world.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11: ⁷ "If in any of the towns in the land that the LORD your God is giving you there is a fellow-Israelite in need, then do not be selfish and refuse to help him. ⁸Instead, be generous and lend him as much as he needs. ⁹Do not refuse to lend him something, just because the year when debts are cancelled is near. Do not let such an evil thought enter your mind. If you refuse to make the loan, he will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty. ¹⁰Give to him freely and unselfishly, and the LORD will bless you in everything you do. ¹¹**There will always be some Israelites who are poor and in need, and so I command you to be generous to them.**"—*Good News Bible*.*†

21. Some nations in the world have social programs to try to help the vulnerable and those in poverty. However, as Christians, we should do what we can to help them even beyond what they may get from the government. (2 Corinthians 8:9; Revelation 21:4; Matthew 25:31-46)
22. How often do we think about the poor and needy?
23. God has spoken against the unjust actions of some of those put in authority. Using very strong language, God expects His chosen leaders to care for the socially disadvantaged.

Psalms 72:12-14: ¹² He rescues the poor who call to him, and those who are needy and neglected.

¹³ He has pity on the weak and poor; he saves the lives of those in need.

¹⁴ He rescues them from oppression and violence; their lives are precious to him.—*Good News Bible*.*

24. There is a remarkable passage in Scripture found in Psalm 82. In this psalm, God through the psalmist spoke out against leaders who perverted justice and oppressed the poor people they were tasked to protect.

Psalm 82:1-8: ¹ God presides in the heavenly council;
in the assembly of the gods he gives his decision:
² “You must stop judging unjustly;
you must no longer be partial to the wicked!
³ **Defend the rights of the poor and the orphans;
be fair to the needy and the helpless.**
⁴ Rescue them from the power of the wicked.
⁵ “How ignorant you are! How stupid!
You are completely corrupt,
and justice has disappeared from the world.
⁶ **‘You [judges] are gods,’ I said;
‘all of you are children of the Most High.’**
⁷ But you will die like mortals;
your life will end like that of any prince.”
⁸ Come, O God, and rule the world;
all the nations are yours.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

[BSG:] In Psalm 82, God declares **His judgments upon Israel’s corrupt judges. The “gods” (Ps. 82:1, 6) are clearly neither pagan gods nor angels because they were never tasked with delivering justice to God’s people and so could not be judged for not fulfilling it.** The charges listed in Psalm 82:2–4 echo the laws of the Torah, identifying the “gods” as Israel’s leaders (*Deut. 1:16–18, Deut. 16:18–20, John 10:33–35*). God questions the “sons of men” whether they judge justly, and their punishment is announced because they have been found unrighteous. The leaders totter in darkness without knowledge (*Ps. 82:5*) because they have abandoned God’s law, the light (*Ps. 119:105*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, February 6.†§

25. Compare this passage from the writings of Moses.

Deuteronomy 1:16-18: ¹⁶ “At that time I instructed them, ‘Listen to the disputes that come up among your people. Judge every dispute fairly, whether it concerns only your own people or involves foreigners who live among you. ¹⁷**Show no partiality in your decisions; judge everyone on the same basis, no matter who they are.** Do not be afraid of anyone, for the decisions you make come from God. If any case is too difficult for you, bring it to me, and I will decide it.’
¹⁸At the same time I gave you instructions for everything else you were to do.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

26. The judges who acted on behalf of God were acting in God’s place. That was why they were called “gods.”

27. As we know, God is the only true God and Sustainer of the entire universe. No human leader can operate outside of His ultimate control. But, think of how many corrupt leaders there have been down through the generations—from the Caesar’s to the 20th century with Stalin, Mao, and Hitler, and the present—that have done so much evil.

[BSG:] Psalm 82 mockingly exposes the apostasy of some leaders who believed themselves to be “gods” above other people. Although God gave the authority and the privilege to the Israelite leaders to be called the “children of the Most High” and to represent Him, God renounces the wicked leaders. God reminds them that they are mortal and subject to the same moral laws as all people. No one is above God’s law (*Ps. 82:6–8*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, February 6.^{†§}

28. Do you exercise any kind of authority over other human beings? Are you exercising that authority with fairness? Justice? And love? When a doctor holds the life of a patient in his skilled hands, is he not acting in God’s place toward that patient?

29. Some psalmists used very strong and harsh language about their enemies.

Psalm 94:1-2: ¹ LORD, you are a God who punishes;

reveal your anger!

² You are the judge of all;

rise and give the proud what they deserve!—*Good News Bible.** [See also Psalm 83:16-18.][†]

30. Some psalms ask God to take vengeance. However, Jesus told us to pray for our enemies.

[BSG:] Some psalms **beseech God to take vengeance** on individuals and nations who intend to harm, or who have already harmed, the psalmists or their people. These psalms can sound perplexing because of their harsh language and apparent discord with the biblical principle of love for enemies (*Matt. 5:44*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, February 7.^{†§}

Matthew 5:44: “But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”—*Good News Bible.**

[BSG:] Yet, the psalmist’s indignation in the face of oppression is a good one. It means that the psalmists took right and wrong more seriously than did many people. He cares, even greatly, about the evil that is done in the world, not just to himself but to others, as well.

However, nowhere does the psalmist suggest himself to be the agent of vengeance. Instead, he leaves retribution solely in God’s hands. The Psalms evoke the divine covenant curses (*Deut. 27:9–16*) and implore God to act as He has promised.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, February 7.^{†§}

31. One of the last psalms to be written is a psalm about the Babylonians, mockingly asking the children of Israel who were their slaves to sing for them. Notice the concluding words.

Psalm 137:8-9: ⁸ Babylon, you will be destroyed.

Happy are those who pay you back

for what you have done to us—

⁹ who take your babies

and smash them against a rock.—*Good News Bible.**

32. Do these ideas correctly represent the God of love that we worship?

[BSG:] God's retribution is measured with justice and grace. God's children are called to pray for those who mistreat them and even to hope for their conversion (*Ps. 83:18, Jer. 29:7*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, February 7.†§

Psalm 83:18: May they know that you alone are the LORD,
supreme ruler over all the earth.—*Good News Bible.**

Jeremiah 29:7: “Work for the good of the cities where I have made you go as prisoners. Pray to me on their behalf, because if they are prosperous, you will be prosperous too.”—*Good News Bible.**

[BSG:] However, while seeking to fit these psalms with the biblical norms of love for enemies, we must be careful not to minimize the agonizing experience expressed in them. God acknowledges the suffering of His children and reassures them that “precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (*Ps. 116:15, NKJV*). **Divine judgment obliges God's people to raise their voices against all evil and seek the coming of God's kingdom in its fullness.** The Psalms also give voice to those who suffer, letting them know that God is aware of their suffering and that one day justice will come.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, February 7.†§

33. ***The final judgment will take place at the throne of God in the holy city when it descends to this earth. But, before that final judgment takes place, the pre-advent judgment must conclude. (See Zechariah 3:1-5 and Daniel 7:9-10.) How does sin destroy sinners? Does that apply only to the second death at the third coming of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and all the holy angels? Or, does that process begin now?***

[BSG:] Yet, the “God-Who-Forgives” takes vengeance upon the wicked deeds of unrepentant people (*Ps. 99:8, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, February 8.†§

Psalm 99:8: O LORD, our God, you answered your people;
you showed them that you are a God who forgives,
even though you punished them for their sins.—*Good News Bible.**

34. The final judgment takes place on two separate occasions, one thousand years apart. Step one will occur at the second coming when the righteous will be taken to heaven and the wicked will be left on this earth, dead.

Revelation 11:18: “The heathen were filled with rage,
because the time for your anger has come,
the time for the dead to be judged.
The time has come to reward your servants, the prophets,
and all your people, all who have reverence for you,
great and small alike.
The time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth!”—*Good News Bible.*†*

35. ***Do these words mean that God is going to destroy the wicked? Or, does sin destroy the wicked? See Romans 6:23 as quoted in Item #10 above.***

36. And remember; we have this assurance:

Romans 8:34: Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right-hand side of God, pleading with him for us!—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] The Psalms are protests against human indifference to injustice; they are a refusal to accept evil. They are motivated not by a desire for revenge but by a zeal to glorify God's name. Hence, it is fitting for the righteous to rejoice when they shall see God's vengeance on evil because in this way God's name and His justice are restored in the world (*Ps. 58:10, 11*). [Do you agree with that?] The Psalms oblige people to raise their voices against evil and to seek the coming of God's kingdom in its fullness. In the Psalms, we are given assurance of divine comfort and deliverance. The Lord will arise!—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, February 9.†§

Psalms 58:10-11: ¹⁰ The righteous will be glad when they see sinners punished; they will wade through the blood of the wicked.

¹¹ People will say, "The righteous are indeed rewarded; there is indeed a God who judges the world."—*Good News Bible*.* [Will we be glad? How should we interpret that section of Psalms?][‡]

37. To what do we have to look forward?

[EGW:] "When men shall revile you, and persecute you," said Jesus, "rejoice, and be exceeding glad." And He pointed His hearers to the prophets who had spoken in the name of the Lord, as "an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." James 5:10. Abel, the very first Christian of Adam's children, died a martyr. Enoch walked with God, and the world knew him not. Noah was mocked as a fanatic and an alarmist. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." Hebrews 11:36, 35.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing** 33.1.‡

38. Consider these questions raised in the Bible study guide.

1. [BSG:] Because the painful realization of the evil in the world can cause one to wonder whether the Lord actually reigns, how can we grow an unshakable faith that will stand strong even under temptation? That is, what must we focus on in order to maintain our faith in God's love and goodness and power? What should the Cross say to us about God and His character?
2. Why is it important not to rely on human means (leaders, institutions, and social movements) as the ultimate wisdom and solution for justice in the world but rely solely on God's Word and judgment?
3. What are the practical implications of the truth that the sanctuary is the place of divine judgment?
4. How can we understand the harsh language of some psalms? How does that language help us relate to the humanity of those who wrote them?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, February 9.‡

39. **Clearly, even from the days of Moses, the children of Israel were admonished to take care of foreigners, orphans, and widows, and, of course, the Levites who were to receive the regular tithes.** But, unfortunately, things deteriorated.

Isaiah 1:17-23: ¹⁷ “And learn to do right. See that justice is done—help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.”

¹⁸The LORD says, “Now, let’s settle the matter. You are stained red with sin, but I will wash you as clean as snow. Although your stains are deep red, you will be as white as wool. ¹⁹If you will only obey me, you will eat the good things the land produces. ²⁰But if you defy me, you are doomed to die. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

[The Sinful Cry]

²¹ The city that once was faithful is behaving like a whore! At one time it was filled with righteous people, but now only murderers remain. ²²Jerusalem, you were once like silver, but now you are worthless; you were like good wine, but now you are only water. ²³Your leaders are rebels and friends of thieves; they are always accepting gifts and bribes. They never defend orphans in court or listen when widows present their case.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Jeremiah 7:6: “Stop taking advantage of aliens, orphans, and widows. Stop killing innocent people in this land. Stop worshipping other gods, for that will destroy you.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Jeremiah 22:3: “I, the LORD, command you to do what is just and right. Protect the person who is being cheated from the one who is cheating him. Do not ill-treat or oppress foreigners, orphans, or widows; and do not kill innocent people in this holy place.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

40. God is described in many ways, including encouraging us to protect the oppressed.

[BSG:] For this reason, the psalmist depicts the Lord as “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows” (*Ps. 68:5, NKJV*). This is the Psalter’s promise: “The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down” (*Ps. 146:9, NKJV; compare with Ps. 10:14*). Our God is the God of the oppressed and the outcast.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{* 80.†§}

41. God was a faithful protector of widows, orphans, and foreigners living among the Israelites. He is the Defender of all those who need His help. He had strong words for those who oppressed or cheated the poor.

42. There are many problems on this earth. Despite our best efforts, humans will never be able to solve them. The final solution to all the evils in our world will come with the arrival of Jesus at the second coming and, then, the final purging of our world at the third coming. Let us pray that those days will be soon.

©2023, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. ^{*}Electronic version. [†]Bold type is added. [‡]Brackets and content in brackets are added. [§]Italic type is in the source. [sic-Br]=This is correct as quoted; it is the British spelling.

Last Modified: January 21, 2024

Email: Info@theox.org