1:5 *The wicked shall not stand in the judgment*- This may have a literal fulfilment at the day of judgment. We will all naturally fall before Jesus then (Rom. 14:11), but the righteous will be stood up (Lk. 21:36), perhaps by an Angel, in the same way as Daniel had a foretaste of the day of judgment and was stood on his feet and reassured of God’s acceptance by an Angel (Dan. 10). Those who come to the judgment will be those who are responsible to God, who have known His ways; yet the wicked amongst them will be swept away like the chaff (:4), which is the judgment which will come upon the kingdoms of men, the Gentile world at large (Dan. 2:35,44). They will share the judgment of this world with which they chose to identify in this life of opportunity to serve God (1 Cor. 11:32).

2:2 *His Anointed*- The Greek word “Christ” means ‘anointed’. This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Scripture. It’s applied in various contexts- e.g. to the Roman and Jewish rulers trying to destroy Christ at His death (Acts 4:26); to the resurrection of Christ (2:7 = Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5); to the opposition to Christ’s people as they preached the Gospel (Acts 4:25) and to the situation soon after His return, when the rebellious nations will seek to overthrow Christ’s rule (2:9 = Rev. 2:27). What this shows is that Old Testament scripture can have multiple interpretations, in the same way as different people at different times can find the same Scripture speaking personally to them; and as we can find a single Bible passage amazingly relevant to us in different contexts and various times of our lives.

3:2 *Selah*- The Psalms were originally sung, and this appears to be a musical instruction requiring a pause. For readers, it effectively means ‘Pause and meditate on this’.

4:4 *Be angry, and don’t sin*- This verse [from the Septuagint] is applied to us by Paul in Eph. 4:26. He interprets it as meaning that anger is not in itself wrong, but because it can so easily lead us to sin, it is better to not go to sleep whilst angry. This kind of daily self-discipline is vital in the spiritual life; the Psalms often comment upon the importance of how we start and end each day.

5:4 *Evil can’t live with You*- There are therefore no sinful beings in Heaven, contrary to the popular belief of many.

6:5 Even a righteous man like David didn’t look forward to conscious survival of death. He wanted to keep on living in this life because he wanted to praise God; and this should be our motivation for asking God for health and victory against illness. If the righteous immediately praise God in Heaven after death, then David’s words and reasoning here make no sense. Instead he looked forward to the Biblical hope of resurrection at Christ’s return and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Note too that “sheol”, the Hebrew word translated “hell” in some Bibles, is clearly understood as referring to death or the grave. As righteous David expected to go there after death, it isn’t the place where sinners go after death.

7 *Concerning the words of Cush*- David’s response to hurtful words and false accusation (:3) was to share his situation with God, rather than brood on the words.

7:4 *Him who without cause was my adversary*- A reference to Saul’s senseless persecution of David.

7:8 *Judge me, Yahweh*- David didn’t fear the day of judgment, but rather he eagerly looked forward to it, as we should. He was secure in his relationship with God, and so that day wasn’t a day of terrible uncertainty ever before him- and neither need it be for us.

8:4 This verse is applied to Jesus as the “son of man” in Heb. 2:6-9 in order to prove that He was of human nature and was not an Angel, as some thought and still think.

8:5 *The Angels*- This translates the Hebrew word *elohim*, which is usually translated “God”. This word can therefore be applied to those who manifest God, although they aren’t God Himself. This is why Angels, men and God’s Son, Jesus, can be called “God” without them being God Himself in person.

9:4 God’s judgment is ongoing; it’s not that God is somehow passive and not paying attention now and will open the books and consider everything when Christ returns. He is passionately involved in our issues and judges them as they happen.

9:8 *He will judge the world in righteousness*- Quoted in Acts 17:31 about how God will judge the world through Jesus when He returns to earth.

9:16 *Yahweh has made Himself known; He has executed judgment*- In observing how God has judged people and nations, we come to know Him better (see too :20). This is why the final judgment of individuals will be in a sense public; the whole purpose of the judgment seat will be for our collective as well as individual benefit, to teach us of the essence of God and prepare us to enter eternity. If we simply entered eternity at Christ’s return without this educational process of participating in and observing the judgment process, we would simply not appreciate His grace as we should.

10:3 *Condemns Yahweh*- Not consciously, in so many words. But when we face God’s principles and decide whether or not we will live by them or believe them, we effectively place God in the dock, and by doing so the wicked condemn Him. But when He is condemned by human judgment, God overcomes at the last (Rom. 3:4).

10:4 Pride is a sin because it pushes God out of our consciousness, replacing Him with self.

10:7,8 These verses are clearly about the “wicked” who rebel against God; and yet before we shake our heads too disapprovingly, remember that they are quoted about us all in Rom. 3:14. For at some times and in some ways, we are all this wicked- if we examine ourselves properly.

10:18 *Man who is of the dust*- One basic outcome of believing in man’s mortality and origin from “dust” is that we won’t fear people.

11:4 We are invited to see God enthroned in a Heavenly court which is sitting 24/7, judging multiple cases at once as they occur worldwide.

11:7 *Shall see His face*- This in a literal sense was the ultimate hope of David (17:5), Job (Job 19:27) and all the faithful (Rev. 22:4); for God exists in a personal, corporeal form, in whose image we are made.

12:3 This verse is alluded to in James 3:5 which speaks of the tongue being such a small part of the body and yet boasting great things, having spiritual effect far out of proportion to its size; James 1:8 and 4:8 also use the idea of double mindedness being reflected in our words. Note how the tongue is here put for the person- for God will cut off wicked speaking persons, rather than excise tongues from mouths. Our words really are to be identified with us; we needn’t think that we can get away with being one person within and yet projecting a quite different image through carefully calculated words.

13:2,6 David could have sorrow in his heart and yet rejoice in his heart because he knew that God was listening to his prayers and would one day answer. This is the almost schizophrenic experience of all believers.

14:1 Atheism was almost unheard of in early Israel. Yet the fool who quietly within his heart thinks as if there is no God is effectively as atheistic as the most hardened scientific atheist of our times.

*There is none who does good*- This is the result of atheism. And yet, frighteningly for those of us who would insist we are not atheists, this is quoted about each of us in Rom. 3:12. We are all atheists at times, in practice, and must throw ourselves upon God’s grace to save us.

15:4 *He who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and doesn’t change*- This is very much the language the Bible often uses about how God keeps His covenant promises of grace to us. When we are tempted to go back on our word, we must remember how God doesn’t do that to us.

16:3 *They are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight*- David often speaks of how he loves others who also love God, and he speaks of them in terms of great respect (15:4). We likewise should find ourselves naturally attracted to other believers, and should always be respectful towards them because of the fact they are loved by God. We cannot believe and keep ourselves in isolation from them, physically or mentally.

16:8-11 These verses are quoted about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, of whom David was a type (Acts 2:27). Jesus is now at God’s right hand offering our prayers to God (Rom. 8:34); and yet this is described here as His eternal pleasure (:11). Jesus takes great joy in offering our prayers to God, and this alone should inspire our prayer life.

17:2 We are invited to see our coming before God’s throne in prayer as a foretaste of the judgment day, when we shall in reality come before His throne. The positive answer to our prayers now- the sentence going forth from the court of Heaven in response to God having as it were judged them- is therefore an encouragement of our final acceptance in that day.

17:4 *The word of Your lips I have kept myself*- Constant reflection upon God’s word is the way to victory against temptation, as Jesus showed by continually quoting from Scripture during His wilderness temptations (Ps. 119:11).

17:8 *The apple of Your eye*- God is simply so sensitive to us.

*Hide me under the shadow of Your wings*- Alluding to the wings of the cherubim covering the ark, where the blood of atonement (representing Christ’s blood) was sprinkled. David saw himself as living in the most holy presence of God wherever he was.

17:15 *Seeing Your form*- Another indication God exists in a literal tangible form, and we shall see Him.

18:5 ‘Sheol’ is the Hebrew word translated “hell” in some Bibles; it is paralleled here with “death” (:4, “the cords of death” are “the cords of Sheol”) and is elsewhere translated “the grave”. It’s not a place where the wicked go for eternal torment; David was a righteous man, and he too went to the grave, or *sheol*.

18:16 *He drew me out of many waters*- This is an allusion to the name ‘Moses’ which means just this (Ex. 2:10); :19 alludes to how Israel were brought out of Egypt to the large place of Canaan, and there are many other Moses / Exodus allusions in this Psalm. We like David are to see similarities between our lives and those of Bible characters, taking them as our warnings, inspiration and friends, as David evidently understood Moses. And of course we will one day eternally be united with our heroes and encouragers in faith.

18:22-24 David speaks like this of his own righteousness, although this Psalm was written in later life, after his sin with Bathsheba (:1 = 2 Sam. 22:1). He can only speak like this because he had learnt the lesson that God’s righteousness really is imputed to us who are sinners; and he rejoices in this reality, believing it to the point that he really felt it and his self-perception reflected it.

18:30 *The word of Yahweh is tried in the furnace*- The experiences of our lives are like the intense fire of a furnace, and God’s word like gold comes through those tests; it is proved not only true but wonderful and beautiful, time and again.

18:43 *You have made me the head of the nations*- But David speaks in :44 as if this had not yet happened. He imagined the things he prayed for as having already happened, just as Jesus taught we should too (Mt. 21:22 Gk.). God speaks of those things which don’t exist as if they do, so certain are they of coming to pass (Rom. 4:17), and we are asked to have this same perspective when it comes to prayer.

18:49 *I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations*- God’s intention was that Israel should be a missionary nation, the light of the Gentile world. But generally they failed to perceive this; David was one of the few who did, because his Psalms often speak of telling the Gentile nations how great God is. He came to this simply from the colossal desire he had to praise God as widely and far as possible because of what God had done for him personally by grace. We should be likewise motivated to take the Gospel o the world around us, on the basis of simply having to tell others the wonderful things which we personally have experienced from God.

19:4 This is quoted in Rom. 10:18 about the preaching of the Gospel into all the world. Thus in the same way as the sun and stars witness to God’s existence worldwide, so the Gospel is to be taken world-wide. The Psalm therefore moves on to talk about the power of God’s word (:7,8) which is being preached.

19:12 If we hope for forgiveness for sins of ignorance, we are accepting that we will be forgiven without specific repentance. As we forgive, according to the principles we apply to forgiving others, so we will be forgiven. If we hope ourselves for forgiveness for sins we’ve not specifically repented of, because we are unaware of them, we likewise must forgive others the sins they do against us without repentance. To insist that we will only forgive others if they repent would mean that we would be unable to pray this prayer.

20:7 Solomon speaks of “my father David” so often that it appears he was dominated by the need he felt to live out David’s parental expectations of him. But Solomon’s obsession with chariots and horses shows that he didn’t follow David in real spiritual terms, just externally. Those whose parents were believers and were raised to believe must ask themselves whether they too are merely living out parental expectation externally.

21:4 David felt that he had been given eternal life in the sense that the covenant blessings had an eternal quality to them (:6). And yet he often speaks about death as the end of conscious existence. We have here an Old Testament equivalent to Christ’s teaching that we can now have eternal life (Jn. 6:54); we will die, in hope of resurrection to eternal life, but we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live. Hence the parables of the Kingdom of God teach about how life can be lived right now.

22:1 Quoted by Christ on the cross (Mt. 27:46). The way Christ calls God “my God” (see :10 also) and prays to Him is not only disproof of the Trinitarian view of Christ; it enables us to find in Christ true inspiration and comfort knowing that He was our representative, of our nature. We are also comforted that to have doubts, even a crisis of faith and understanding as to why God isn’t acting isn’t a sin; for Christ had these feelings and yet never sinned. Christ said these words “about the ninth hour” (Mt. 27:46), and yet He died at the ninth hour (Mk. 15:34). That He had some sense of crisis at the very end adds the ultimate in drama to the crucifixion account, and makes His final victory yet more glorious.

22:8 Quoted against Christ on the cross (Mt. 27:43). We are encouraged by the New Testament application of this Psalm to Christ to see the whole Psalm as giving a unique window into the thoughts of God’s Son in His time of dying.

22:14 *My bones are out of joint*- The Messianic Psalms often stress the pain Christ felt in His bones; crucifixion was designed to make the bones of the crucified suffer. We who are baptized into the body of Christ are described as His bones (Eph. 5:30); and yet not one of Christ’s bones was broken (Jn. 19:36). In all this we have profound encouragement. We are to suffer with Christ, sharing His cross; and yet ultimately we will not be broken, but rise again to eternity, just as His body and bones did. From the awkward and unnatural position of the crucified, Christ could look down upon His literal bones and feel they were as persons looking at Him (:17); thus it seems He had an awareness of us as He hung there.

22:18 Fulfilled in Mt. 27:35; Jn. 19:24.

22:22 This is quoted in Heb. 2:12 to demonstrate Christ’s identity with us, having had human nature. He was especially close to us in His death, and we likewise can look to Him there and feel close to Him and His closeness to us. The tone of the Psalm now becomes more positive, as Christ comes to think of us, the “congregation” [LXX *ecclesia*, the church] who would be brought into being on account of His suffering. It could be that He quoted the entire Psalm out loud; “He has finished it” (:31) in the LXX is “It is finished”, which were the very last words of Christ (Jn. 19:30).

23:5 *A table before me in the presence of my enemies*- Sometimes in the depths of despair God will provide an amazing grace to us; and He did this when David fled from his own son through the wilderness, and Barzillai unexpectedly laid out a feast table for David in the semi-desert (2 Sam. 17:27-29). This act of kindness transformed the dry terrain into “green meadows” for David (:2). Our thoughtful grace to others can do the same for them.

24:5 God’s blessing is defined here as His righteousness; the blessing of God promised to Abraham and his seed involves the blessing of forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:25,26). This is achieved by God counting us His righteousness to us, looking at us another way- and this becomes possible for us who are baptized into Christ, whereby His righteous character is counted to us.

25:8,9 *He will instruct sinners in the way... He will teach the humble His way*- The humble here therefore refer to repentant sinners. This is the frame of mind which makes us most teachable by God, and in this way God works through sin, in that repentance for it makes people more open to His teaching.

25:10 The more we live daily life in harmony with God’s will, the more we will perceive that all His ways, His workings, both over history and in our lives, reflect His grace. We will not see Him as hard and unreasonable.

25:22 *Redeem Israel, God*- Many of the Psalms are David’s personal pleas for mercy, but they merge towards the end of them into a request for God to show mercy to all His people. He looked out of His own sufferings to those of others, and took comfort in the fact that God’s ultimate plan is to have a redeemed people living eternally on earth.

26:1 *Without wavering*- This Psalm appears very self-righteous, with David considering himself separate from sinners (:9); it contrasts with the Psalms written after the sin with Bathsheba, which often talk of David’s desire to reach out to sinners rather than about separating from them.

26:3 God’s truth refers to a way of life and being rather than to a set of pure theologies. “Truth” is paralleled here with “grace”, which is the ultimate truth.

27:9 *Don’t abandon me*- Contrast this with the utter confidence expressed elsewhere in this Psalm. We can have the emotions of fear, even of panic, and yet at the same time feel deep faith in God. In this time of need, David reflected how God had earlier delivered him (:2), and this should feature in our response to crises.

27:10 The classic middle aged crisis of loneliness as parents die, the links with the past are cut, is here resolved in the feeling of God’s personal parenthood toward us.

27:14 *Wait*- So often the Psalms speak of the need to “wait” for God. We assume His response must be immediate, but the ‘gap’ between our prayer and His response is necessary, for the sake of the development of our faith. It maintains that appropriate distance which has to be between God and man at this stage.

28:2 *Hear the voice of my petitions*- Yet within the same prayer, David can rejoice that God “*has* heard the voice of my petitions” (:6). We are to pray for things believing and feeling that we have received them (Mk. 11:24); we are to have the perspective of God Himself, who speaks of things which currently aren’t as if they are (Rom. 4:17). Therefore David can conclude this prayer with praise that God has actually answered it already (:7).

28:8,9 Again David looks out of himself in his immediate need to others, rejoicing as he often does at the end of his Psalms that *his* positive experience of God will be that of all God’s people. We can at least take the lesson that we are to look out of ourselves to others rather than be swamped by the immediacy of our own issues.

29:5 Here and in :8 we have “the voice of Yahweh” paralleled with Yahweh in person. God is His word- hence we read that “the word was God” (Jn. 1:1). Our attitude to God’s word is our attitude to God; it’s therefore not possible to claim to be in relationship with God if we ignore His word as we now have it in the Bible. There’s much talk about “God” but unless this is based upon His word, we are believing in a ‘God’ of our own creation rather than the true God who is revealed in the Bible.

30:6 David seems to be reflecting upon some life threatening illness he suffered after his sin with Bathsheba (:2,3); the title of the Psalm shows he wrote this as he was preparing for his son Solomon to build the temple, towards the end of his life. He is reflecting how he had fallen into sin as a result of assuming that he could never fall from the spiritual place he felt he was at. Whilst we should be confident that if Christ returns today we shall be saved by grace, we cannot assume that we shall always be where we are now spiritually, and we should always maintain a keen sense of the eternity we may miss if we turn away.

30:7 *Mountain*- Used in Scripture to refer to a Kingdom or family; David’s ‘mountain’ in this sense was “troubled” as a result of his sin with Bathsheba.

30:9 This request again indicates that David didn’t go to Heaven on death (Acts 2:34), but understood death as total unconsciousness until Christ’s return.

31:2,3 *Be to me a strong rock... for You are my rock*- David is asking God to be to him in practice what he accepted God to be theoretically. Time and again we seek to make this same conversion from theory to practical reality as we face life’s situations.

31:5 *Into Your hand I commend my spirit*- Chosen by Jesus as His last words from the cross as He died (Lk. 23:46). Perhaps the next half of the sentence were His first thoughts on awaking in resurrection: “You have redeemed me, Yahweh, God of truth”.

31:7 *You have known my soul in adversities*- God as it were gets to know us when He sees us in crises. Although He knows all things, we reveal ourselves to Him by how we feel and respond in those times.

31:15 *Redeem me*- But David has stated that God had already redeemed him (:5). So often in the Psalms we encounter this struggle to believe and feel as if our prayer has been heard before it actually is; and it is the same struggle we daily have in our prayer life.

31:21 *He has shown me His marvellous loving kindness in a fortified city*- David saw the similarities between himself and the spies who entered the fortified city of Jericho and found themselves trapped within it, with no human way of escape.

32:1,2 This is a soliloquy, David talking to himself as he meditated upon God’s forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba. But it is quoted in Rom. 4:7 with a subtle change of pronoun; “blessed is he” (:1) is changed to “blessed are *they*”. Thus David’s sin with Bathsheba and in murdering Uriah her husband becomes representative of all our sins, and we have received the same amazing grace which David did, seeing that there was no legal way out of what he had done- he deserved only death. See on 38:4.

32:4 This refers to the period of time between the sin and the visit of Nathan which convicted David of his sin (2 Sam. 12).

32:6 *Let each one who is Godly pray to You*- David’s experience of sin and utter forgiveness should inspire each sinner to repent; but the repentant sinner is here described as “Godly”. Godliness doesn’t mean we are sinless, but rather that we believe in God’s forgiveness and are willing to repent.

32:8 David’s experience of forgiveness became the motive for his preaching of it to others. Isaiah, Peter, the disciples and many others were given preaching commissions immediately after having been convicted of their own sinfulness. For this is the attitude of mind which makes preaching powerful and usable by God.

33:6 *By Yahweh’s word the heavens were made*- This alludes to how the Genesis record of creation states that “God said” and things came into existence (:9). It explains how “all things” were made by God’s word (Jn. 1:3). That same word which created all around us is likewise powerful to create a new creation within the formless darkness of our own lives and minds (2 Cor. 5:17). By reading and responding to God’s word we expose ourselves to colossal and awesome creative power.

33:22 God’s grace is realized and effective in our lives according to our belief in its extent. It is we and not God who are limiting what is possible. If Abraham had prayed for Sodom to be saved for the sake of just the one righteous man there (Lot), perhaps he would’ve been heard; the man who thought the Lord’s ability to heal was limited by His power was taught that the opposite is true, in that all things are possible but are limited by human faith (Mk. 9:22,23).

34:7 This suggests that we have a guardian Angel permanently settled down (Heb.) around us; the early church believed this (Acts 12:15). The Angels minister to us in order to bring us towards salvation (Heb. 1:14). The reference to Yahweh’s “eyes” (:15) may also refer to our guardian Angels.

34:17 *The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears*- This parallels David’s statement that he had cried and Yahweh had heard him (:6). Again he looks out of his own issues and sees them in the wider context of God’s people; He has delivered them historically, so He will deliver us; if He delivers us, He will deliver His people in the future, and so we can reason from our personal testimony to persuade them to trust Him as we have. The Psalms are songs, and David was using them to share his faith with others.

34:20 This was supremely fulfilled in the fact that no bone of Jesus was broken by the crucifixion process (Jn. 19:36). See on 22:14.

35:3 *Tell my soul, “I am Your salvation”*- David so often tells himself and us that God is indeed his salvation. But here he is asking God to speak directly to his heart and persuade him deeper of this truth. We too can ask God to directly increase our faith.

35:5,6 Threshing and winnowing the wheat from the chaff is a common Biblical metaphor for the final day of judgment. The rejected will be chased away from Christ by the Angels into darkness (:6). The Bible teaches that Jesus will return from Heaven to judge us with the Angels with Him; they will play a part in the judgment process, which will be appropriate as they have been our guardians and stood with us through every moment of our lives (see on 34:7). There are frequent Biblical descriptions of the punishment of the wicked, wallowing at least for some period in darkness, rejected from the Lord they so wish to now be with [hence they are chased away from Him, as Adam was out of Eden, again by Angels]. These aren’t to scare us into obedience, but to bring constantly before us the sober importance of the eternal issues which we face (see 2 Cor. 5:11).

35:14 *I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother*- David speaks in the context of his love for Saul despite the endless persecution he received from him, and here alludes to his famous lament over Saul at his death (2 Sam. 1). A man mourning for his mother, rather than a woman for her mother or a father for his son, is a carefully chosen similitude. For a man’s mourning for his mother features the bitter regret that ‘I didn’t appreciate her as I should’ve done’. And this was how David felt for Saul at his end. In this we see a most unusual level of love and sensitivity. And yet even that is but a dim reflection of the colossal love of God and Jesus for us, and their sensitivity to us and appreciation of our feeble spirituality.

36:9 *In Your light shall we see light*- Our worldview is to be that of God; His perspective is to be ours.

36:12 *There the workers of iniquity are fallen*- The obvious question of the Bible student to the statement “there” is “Where?”. And the context seems to provide no answer. But David was imagining in his own mind the final destruction of the wicked at judgment day, as he often does in the Psalms. “There”, in his mind’s eye, he sees them fallen and without resurrection to eternal life. And this gives him perspective on his sufferings at their hands. We too can usefully play ‘Bible television’ and try to imagine the scene at judgment day. Whether we get all the details correct or not isn’t so important; the exercise provides huge perspective for us in our present life experiences.

37:4 *He will give you the desires of your heart*- This isn’t a blank cheque promise that we will get whatever we ask from God. If we delight in Him, then our greatest desires will be forgiveness from Him, to see His glory extended, and to have a place in His eternal Kingdom. And it is this latter desire which this Psalm speaks of frequently, comforting us in the hope of eternity in God’s Kingdom on earth; a hope which means that we will not be jealous of the wicked who are briefly prospering in this very short life (:1). See on 38:9.

37:21 *The righteous give generously*- The inspiration for generosity in this life is that we shall eternally inherit the Kingdom on earth (:22). If we really believe that we shall and do even now partake in this ultimate Divine generosity, we will naturally be generous in the few things God has entrusted to us in this life.

37:23 *He delights in his way*- God delights in our life path, even though that path includes stumbling (:24).

37:25,26 Just as Israel were provided with basic bread, water and clothing for their wilderness journey towards the promised land, so God has promised to provide us with such basic necessities. We can take colossal comfort from this, although it so easily becomes obscured by our materialistic society bent as it is on acquisition. The fact that most of us are no longer agriculturally self-sufficient likewise tempts us to doubt this promise. Having this assurance, we can ‘afford’ to be generous (:26), not just rising to it occasionally, but as a characteristic of our lives, the very spirit by which we live (“all day long”).

37:29 This is a clear proof text that the hope of the righteous is eternal life on earth, not in Heaven. The allusion is clearly to the promises to Abraham of eternal inheritance of the land, and these promises are the basis of the Christian Gospel to which we stand related by baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:8, 27-29).

38:4 *As a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me*- This is applied to all of us by Jesus when He invites we the heavy burdened to come to Him and find relief for that heavy load (Mt. 11:28). David is talking of his sins related to Bathsheba and Uriah; and again we find them being understood as typical of all our sins (see on 32:1,2).

38:9 *All my desire is before You*- All David’s desire was for forgiveness; see on 37:4.

38:11 The consequence of sin is that it separates and isolates the sinner, as David found after his sin with Bathsheba, which resulted in the breakup of his family and his son conspiring to kill him and take over the kingdom. Some may sin and apparently not experience this isolation; but they feel it internally. That sin isolates the sinner, literally or psychologically, is designed by God; for it is in that isolation and self-analysis that the sinner has the opportunity to reconnect with God on a deeply personal level.

39:1 *Keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me*- We need to think ahead as to our likely weaknesses, recognizing that being in the presence of some people is going to provoke us to speak badly. In all our spiritual battles we should talk to ourselves like David did, and be aware of how upcoming situations are likely to lead us into temptation.

39:4-6 David reminded himself of man’s mortality in order to steel himself against the temptation to talk wrongly; he realized that sinning with the tongue can lead to losing our hope of eternity, and so he reminded himself of this in the face of the upcoming meeting he was going to have with people who would tempt him to misuse his tongue. We can do the same.

39:13 David didn’t go to Heaven at death (Acts 2:34); he understood death as total unconsciousness.

40:3 *Many shall see it*- David perceived the influence his spiritual victory or failure would influence others. Without encouraging posturing and posing, we should also be aware of this dimension to life and be motivated by it in our spiritual battles.

40:6 *You have digged my ears*- An allusion to the Law’s provision for a servant to decide to permanently remain in his master’s household and be adopted into the family- see Ex. 21:5,6.

40:6-8 Quoted in Heb. 10:5-8 about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Notice how Jesus addressed God as “my God”- another difficulty for Trinitarian theology. Yet the initial context was David reflecting that his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah couldn’t be atoned for by any sacrifice; for there was none prescribed for what he had done. He simply vowed to give himself completely to God and declare God’s grace to all men (:9,10). Yet this was fulfilled by Jesus in the death of the cross, which ended the need for animal sacrifices. Indeed many of the Bathsheba Psalms are applied to Jesus in His time of dying on the cross. He there knew fully the feelings of David and every desperate sinner; not that He sinned, but so identified was He with us there that He entered into the feelings of every sinner.

41:1 “The day of evil” ultimately refers to the day of judgment. In that day we will be as the poor who beg us for grace in this life; we should therefore be generous to them, even if their poverty, like our spiritual poverty, is ultimately the result of their own poor decision making and sin.

41:9 *My own familiar friend*- Quoted as Christ’s feelings about Judas in Jn. 13:18. Jesus called Judas his “friend” at the moment of betrayal (Mt. 26:50). The question of course is how could Jesus ‘trust’ Judas and feel hurt at the betrayal when He knew from the beginning who should betray Him (Jn. 6:70,71). One window on this is to remember that Jesus shared our human nature, and we have the possibility within that nature to know something very well about a person, and yet our love for them means that we still trust them. Samson’s love and trust in Delilah, when it was obvious she was going to betray him, is a parade example. The love of Christ was and is surpassing in its depth. Love isn’t cynical, but hopes all things; and He hoped for Judas, that somehow the humanly inevitable wouldn’t happen; just as God told prophets like Ezekiel from the start that Israel wouldn’t hear them, and yet He appeals for Israel to hear the words of those prophets. That same hopeful love is focused on us who are in Christ; that is the practical encouragement and comfort we can take from this insight into the Lord’s thinking about Judas.

42 Korah died in the wilderness and is often highlighted as the ringleader of the rebellion against Moses. But his sons were faithful, and they or their descendants wrote Psalms which are preserved within the book of Psalms. The lesson is that we can rise above our backgrounds and the influence of unbelieving parents, even when it seems that humanly speaking we are victims of our backgrounds. But in Christ we can be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

42:9 Even in times of doubt and misunderstanding at God’s apparent silence, we are to still feel that God is our rock.

43:5 *Why are you in despair, my soul?*- We all talk to ourselves. It’s important that our self talk is positive, urging ourselves spiritually onwards, rather than reflecting on the empty things of life which lead nowhere. Note how these prayers recorded in the Psalms merge between addressing God and addressing ourselves; prayer is a time of reflection and openness before God, not simply a list of requests baldly presented to Him.

44:3 *They didn’t get the land in possession by their own sword*- This alludes to how Jacob’s final words were a claim that he had taken possession in the land by his own sword and bow (Gen. 48:22). Note how :4 says that it was God who gave Jacob his victories. Jacob was a faithful man who will be in the Kingdom, and yet he didn’t achieve perfection, and died with weakness and misunderstanding on his lips. Without encouraging complacency, we can take comfort that we will not of ourselves attain moral perfection and will die with some weaknesses and spiritual blind points; and yet still be saved by God’s grace if we abide faithful to Him in our hearts. But in this case it is for us to learn the lesson of Jacob’s failure- the Psalm goes on to teach us that our inheritance of the Kingdom will be by grace and not by our own sword and strength (:6).

44:22 *For Your sake we are killed all day long*- Quoted in Rom. 8:36 in the context of teaching that even though we are killed all day long, this cannot separate us from the saving love of Christ. The context of Ps. 44:22 is speaking of how Israel suffered for their sins in being slaughtered by their enemies. So Paul in Romans is comforting us that although we may suffer for our sins, even those sufferings do not separate us from the saving love of Christ who quite simply so earnestly wants to save us in the end.

45:6,7 Quoted in Heb. 1:8,9 to demonstrate the greatness and humanity of Christ. He is clearly not God Himself because God the Father is referred to as Christ’s God (“your God”). Yet the term “God” is applied to Him in :6, in the sense that the Hebrew word here translated “God” means simply a “mighty one”, a term which has just been used about Christ in :3. We are the “fellows” of Jesus (:7), and He was only exalted above us by God, not because He Himself was in nature above us. This exaltation was at the end of His mortal life, in which He had demonstrated His love for righteousness. He was “anointed” in that He was “made... Christ”, which means ‘anointed’, by God, after His resurrection (Acts 2:36).

45:11 A spiritual man will perceive beauty in a woman in relation to how far she has separated from the things of the world (:10) and is separated unto God’s things.

46:5 *God will help her at dawn*- The return of Christ to earth is likened to the rising of the sun at daybreak (Mal. 4:2). The final visible intervention of God in response to our prayers will be at this time. The earthquakes and tidal waves spoken of in :2,3 may refer to the time of trouble which will come on earth just prior to Christ’s return.

47:4 *Jacob whom He loved. Selah*- We are to meditate (“Selah”) upon the fact that God so loved Jacob, and was and is the God who was Jacob’s God. There are so many references to Jacob in the Psalms. Jacob was spiritually weak for much of his life, and was led by God to a final spiritual maturity, although Jacob responded very slowly and weakly to this leading over the decades of his life. The Psalms encourage us that our God is the God who stuck with and dearly loved Jacob. Abraham showed more faith and spirituality than Jacob, but God is more frequently referred to as Jacob’s God rather than Abraham’s.

48:8 *God will establish it forever. Selah*- The point of meditation here (“Selah”) is that Jerusalem will last forever- because God promised David that his great son, the Lord Jesus, would reign on his throne, i.e. in Jerusalem, forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). For all the metaphor and symbology of the Bible, there are some basic literal realities we are to ever keep in mind; and one of these is that Christ shall literally reign for ever from Jerusalem over God’s Kingdom on earth.

48:10 The content of our praise is to be the Name of God, which is His characteristics (Ex. 34:4-6).

49:8 It may seem obvious that money can’t buy a place in God’s Kingdom, but whilst everybody would agree to that statement, effectively those who trust in wealth to the exclusion of faith in God are saying just this. The price of redemption is far more than money- it was ultimately in the blood of God’s dear Son.

49:11 We live under the illusion that we are somehow rational, logical and sensible in our decision making and attitudes. But in fact we are not. Human beings can be incredibly stupid and live in denial of the obvious. We shall die and in that sense lose whatever wealth or property we have acquired on the earth. But the inward thought of people is that somehow, that wealth remains personally attached to them after their death. This is a penetrating psychological insight. It mocks at any desire to attain personal wealth which will endure after our death; now is the time to use whatever we have in the Lord’s service.

49:12 *He is like the animals that perish*- A proof of man’s mortal nature, disproving the myths of reincarnation and life in Heaven after death.

49:19,20 Those who don’t understand God’s ways and aren’t therefore responsible to His judgment will remain dead for ever like the animals.

50:1 *Speaks, and calls the earth*- God created the world through the medium of His word, He spoke and it was done. But He hasn’t as it were turned away from His creation; the cycles within the natural creation may appear to be on clockwork, but in a sense God consciously brings them forth again by the medium of His word. That word as manifest to us through the Bible is equally active and powerful in an ongoing and always creative way. The idea of our living in an active universe, in which all things are consciously within God’s awareness and a result of the ongoing activity of His word, means that truly God is never far from us; we simply need to look out at the natural creation to feel again His active involvement in our world. See on 65:6.

50:5 When Christ returns, the faithful will be gathered to judgment (Mt. 24:31); and it is the gathering of the faithful which this Psalm has in view. But this is only part of the wider Biblical picture, which speaks of all those responsible to God being also gathered to judgment.

50:15 *Call on Me in the day of trouble*- This is the sacrifice which God wants. Rather than us giving things to God, He wants us to *trust* in Him, to turn to Him before turning to anything else.

50:21 The apparent silence of God can deceive the wicked into thinking they will not give account to Him. But there will be in some sense a going through with the wicked of all their deeds (Mt. 25:43). This will be such an awful experience for them that it will of itself be their punishment; for ultimately, they will return to the dust never to exist again, seeing that the wages for sin is ultimately death (Rom. 6:23).

51:6 *Truth in the inward parts*- The innermost truth we can come to know is that we really have sinned and been forgiven; this is the ultimate “wisdom” rather than any intellectual knowledge or theological purity.

51:10 God can act directly on our hearts and create mindsets and attitudes, in response to our desire for them.

51:13 David vowed to respond to God’s gracious forgiveness of him by preaching to others. Our motivation for witness should be our own very personal awareness of having received forgiveness and grace which we never possibly deserved.

51:16 There was no sacrifice under the Mosaic law which could cleanse David from the sins he had committed.

52:4 *You deceitful tongue*- David is addressing Doeg (see the Psalm title), but he speaks of Doeg as if Doeg is his tongue. We are identified with our words, they are us, just as God’s word is Him (Jn. 1:3). We can’t therefore excuse ourselves from bad speaking by reasoning that in our hearts we are not like that. Our words reflect us, and therefore by them we will be condemned or justified in the last judgment (Mt. 12:37).

52:8 *I am like a green olive tree in God’s house*- But David at this time was on the run from Saul in the wilderness, and was not calmly sitting in the tabernacle; nor was he physically “in the presence of Your saints” (:9). And yet within his own heart, David felt identified with God’s people and in His presence. This is a comfort for those who may be isolated from church life and from other believers; we can really be there in spirit, as David was in his wilderness years.

53:2 *Who understood, who seek after God*- To seek for God, thereby recognizing that we don’t understand Him to perfection, is considered by Him to be understanding Him.

53:3 These verses speak of a category of people who in their heart are at times pure atheists (:1), and who are described as “filthy” and do no good. We are therefore shocked to find Paul quoting these words about every one of us (Rom. 3:12). There in Romans Paul is seeking to challenge the attitude that ‘I may be a sinner, but I’m not like *them*’. He does so in order to convict us of our sin, and the just sentence of death which is upon us; in order to help us gasp with more wonder and gratitude at God’s amazing grace in having counted us as righteous because we are baptized into Christ.

55:3 *Because of the words*- The mental suffering David describes in these verses was largely because of the words of his enemies; words really can make people feel like dying and lead them to suicidal thoughts. Words can never be treated as ‘only words’; they have a real power, and therefore we have a deep responsibility for our words. We must remember this, living as we do in a society which judges behaviour far harder than it does ‘mere’ words. No threat in this sense is ever an ‘empty threat’, because words are of themselves so destructive.

55:9 *Confound their language*- Exactly what God did to those who built the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:7). We like David need to see our abusers in Biblical terms, seeing how in essence our abusers are so similar to those in Biblical incidents.

55:13,14 This refers to David’s betrayal by Ahithophel, Bathsheba’s grandfather, and his own one time confidante (2 Sam. 15:31; 1 Chron. 27:33). It is clearly typical of Christ’s betrayal by Judas, whom he also calls his “friend” (Mt. 26:50); as to why Christ in this sense trusted Judas so as to be so hurt by his betrayal, see on 41:9. The historical record simply states Ahithophel’s betrayal of David, but here we see how David didn’t just take it stoically, but was deeply hurt by it and poured out his soul to God in hurt and pain. We need to imagine the feelings of the Biblical characters as they went through the events which are historically recorded.

56:8 Tear bottles were kept by mourners at funerals; they put their tears in a bottle which they then kept in memory of the deceased. But David says that his tears are in God’s bottle. The idea was that your tears went into your bottle. But David was so intimate with God that he perceived that his tears were in fact God’s. The intimacy David achieved with God is absolutely possible for us too.

57:1 David didn’t see the physical cave he was hiding in (see Psalm title) as his refuge, but rather perceived God as his refuge. We may use medicines, doctors and all kinds of human things in our times of need, but we must perceive God as our true helper and final saviour rather than any of those things.

57:4 The vagabonds who supported David during his wilderness years were unspiritual men, and David so desperately longed for spiritual company. But David in his heart was ecstatic at God’s presence, and must’ve composed these words whilst laying with those men in the cave. This is a parade example to us of spiritual mindedness in unspiritual company.

58:1 *Silent ones*- There is a time to keep silence, but if we don’t speak out for the abused at times we are paralleled with those who are proactively abusive. So much evil happens because ‘good’ people do nothing.

58:10 Our natural unease at reading these kinds of things is a reflection of our underestimate of the seriousness of sin, and the desperate need which there is for justice to be done. If we have such a perspective, then we will rejoice to see it done at the last day.

59:14,15 This seems to speak of the rejected at the last day. Just as the rejected virgins knock at the door earnestly wanting Jesus to open to them (Mt. 25:11), as Cain dwelt at the east of Eden in the hope of being readmitted to Paradise (Gen. 4:16), so the wicked of David’s time [who were Israelites, members of God’s covenant people] will walk around the holy city wishing to be let in, howling like desperate dogs. Rev. 22:15 using the same figure for the rejected- dogs outside God’s city. In that final day of eternal truth, nobody will be indifferent; all present there will desperately wish to be in God’s Kingdom. If our final destiny is to stand before God desperately desiring to be in His Kingdom, we must live our lives today with the same passion; for we make the answer now. All too late the rejected will come to really believe in God’s eternal Kingdom on earth (:13); but it will be too late to change anything, for the judgment is ongoing now.

60:3 *You have made us drink the wine*- Being given a cup of wine to drink is a double symbol; it speaks of either our eternal blessing (1 Cor. 10:16) or condemnation. The communion service is therefore designed to bring us up against the two possible futures which there are for us; blessing or condemnation. We therefore drink either to our blessing or to our condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29). It is therefore a powerful aid towards self-examination.

60:9 *Who has led me to Edom?*- The Psalm title shows that this was a song written in response to Israel’s victory over Edom, but in it David continually emphasizes how their earlier attempt had failed because of their sin. Even when God does great things for us, we must be ever aware of our sins and unworthiness of any victory He gives us.

61:6,7 Although David clearly expected to die, as other Psalms indicate, he understood that he had been promised eternal life in that the promises to him were that he would see his great descendant, the Lord Jesus, reigning eternally in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:16). This necessitated a resurrection to eternal life. The idea of eternal life is found in the Old Testament because it is required by the promises to Abraham and David which were the basis of God’s covenant; it didn’t just arise in the New Testament. The life, death and resurrection of Christ was the basis upon which those earlier promises of eternity had been made, but the basic promise of eternal salvation had begun to be offered in Genesis.

62:1 *God alone*- The Hebrew word translated “alone” also means “one”. The fact that God is one isn’t merely a numerical statement. Because there is only one God, we are to trust Him alone. In life’s crises we are to turn to God alone, quite simply because there is only one God. Our belief in the unity of God isn’t merely a theological position, it has huge practical meaning- especially in a world where there are so many attempts to replace trust in God, be it through insurance policies, clever lawyers, smart doctors or roadside rescue services.

62:12 *You reward every man according to his work*- Quoted in Rev. 22:12 about what will happen at the judgment seat of Christ at His return. Because God has this principle, of judging according to behaviour, we thereby see His grace- for despite this, He will still save us. And that, therefore, must be by His grace alone.

63:11 *The mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped*- This is quoted about all of us in Rom. 3:19, where Paul reasons that because we’re all sinners, we’re all liars- for untruth is the essence of sin. By doing so we’re not being true to ourselves, to God, to His word, to our brethren… we profess covenant relationship with God, to be His people, and yet we fail to keep the terms of that covenant. In the context, Paul is teaching that the Law of Moses convicted all God’s people of this, and in this way led them to the need for Christ. Yet Is. 52:15 prophesied that the crucified Jesus would result in men shutting their mouths. The righteousness and perfection displayed there in one Man, the very human Lord Jesus, has the same effect upon us as the Law of Moses- we shut our mouths, convicted of sin.

64:9 *All mankind shall be in awe*- We naturally wonder how “all mankind” will be in awe at the judgment of some Israelites in David’s time who abused him. The fact is that they will be resurrected and judged, and the judgment will in some sense be public, before all (Rev. 16:15). It will be an amazing teaching mechanism, seeing the lives of billions of people played back and analyzed, and observing the condemnation of the wicked. It will prepare us for entry to God’s eternal Kingdom, understanding His principles and grace in a way which we have perhaps not risen to in this life- even though His judgments are in His word and are even now made manifest.

65:3 *You atoned for our transgressions*- The atonement for sin was achieved through the death of Christ, who hadn’t died at David’s time. But God forgave sin in Old Testament times on the basis that He foresaw the death of Christ, who as it were was slain from the beginning (Rev. 13:8). God speaks of things which don’t exist as though they do (Rom. 4:17), because He views from outside the limitations of human time. This is why He can speak of things and persons (not least His Son) as existing before they did. This doesn’t mean they pre-existed in any literal sense, but they existed in His plan and purpose.

65:6 *By His power forms the mountains*- God didn’t just form the mountains at the time of Genesis 1 and leave them, He is actively forming mountains to this day. A theme of this Psalm is that God is actively at work in the natural creation; the water cycle doesn’t as it were run on clockwork but rather as a result of God’s active, conscious and passionate involvement (:9-11)- see on 50:1.

66:1,2 Often the Psalms invite the Gentile world to join with Israel in their praise of God as their saviour (also :5). Israel were intended to be a light to the Gentiles around them, and to bring them to faith and covenant relationship with God. They failed in this, for the most part, despite these faithful Psalmists who sought to do so through the medium of producing songs which they hoped would penetrate into the surrounding nations. The great commission bids each of us to take the same message into the Gentile darkness around us.

66:6 *We rejoiced in Him*- Often in the Psalms we are invited to consider ourselves as Israel in Egypt, subsequently rejoicing at the Red Sea deliverance; hence the Psalmist speaks of “us” as having gone through Israel’s experience of suffering and salvation (:11,12). The New Testament likewise invites us to see our baptism as a passing through the Red Sea, and our lives today as like their wilderness journey towards the Kingdom (1 Cor. 10:1-4). We are to as it were play ‘Bible television’, imagining the events as if we were there historically; for spiritually, it is all equally true for us in our salvation from this world of sin.

67:2 *Your salvation among all nations*- see on 66:1,2.

67:4 Applied in Acts 17:31 to the judgment of the world at Christ’s return.

68:6 *God sets the lonely in families*- He did this when He brought His prisoner people out from Egyptian bondage. The numbering of the tribes after they had crossed the Red Sea implies that every Israelite had a family group. Those who were alone were therefore placed within families. The community of God’s people today, who have likewise passed through the water of baptism as Israel crossed the Red Sea, should likewise be characterized by inclusiveness and a binding of individuals together in a new spiritual family in Christ. Cliques based around existing families or friendship groups mustn’t be allowed to stop this unique unity occurring- for it is this mysterious Christian unity which is powerful enough to convert the world if it is lived out as it should be (Jn. 17:21).

68:11 There is here and in :12,25 a strong emphasis on the participation of women in the spreading of the good news of God’s redemption of His people. The idea was quite radical in that conservative, male dominated world. The broad picture we are to take away is that absolutely all of us, men and women, whether or not others consider us appropriate witnesses, are to share the good news of God’s salvation with the entire world.

68:18 This is applied in Eph. 4:8 to the ascension of Christ in order to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit which He then gave to the first century church, in order to prepare it to be a place where God might dwell. Whilst the miraculous gifts were withdrawn once the church was established, Christ’s parables teach that we have each been given some gift by Him which we are to use to prepare for God’s Kingdom and to enable His dwelling amongst men on earth (Mt. 25:15). We have each been given something as a result of Christ’s sacrifice and victorious ascension to Heaven, and we are therefore to ensure that we use them.

69:9 *For the zeal of Your house consumes me*- Applied to Jesus in Jn. 2:17; so many verses in this Psalm are relevant to Him. Verse 8 refers to His estrangement from His half brothers and natural family (Jn. 7:5). “The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me” is referred to Christ in Rom. 15:3, and is therefore applied to us who are in Him- in that we are to be so concerned with others’ salvation and welfare that we can rise above the experience of personal reproach and insult rather than being obsessed by it and paralyzed from being of service.

69:14-16 The urgent desire for immediate deliverance is here in the context of a Psalm definitely speaking of Christ’s sufferings on the cross. There was certainly a sense of urgency, crisis and desire for immediate deliverance which wasn’t answered immediately (see too 22:1). He knew there the crisis of unanswered prayer; He there shared the quintessence of all our crises.

69:20 This looking for comforters and finding none must mean that these verses describe Christ at the very end of the hours of crucifixion, when John and Mary had walked away. The reproaches shouted by mindless, small minded people in the crowd broke His heart, such was His amazing sensitivity to words, so eager was He to be accepted by Israel as their Messiah.

69:21 Clearly relevant to the offer of vinegar to Christ in response to His plea “I thirst” (Jn. 19:28,29).

69:22 Applied to the Jews who crucified Christ in Rom. 11:9.

69:25 The LXX of this verse is quoted in Acts 1:20 and applied to Judas for his betrayal of Christ.

69:27 God counts those who believe in Him as righteous because He imputes righteousness to them; but He also counts sinners as increasingly sinful. Thus there is both an upward and downward spiral in life; we are always moving one way or the other, and never static.

71:15 *I don’t know its full measure*- Like us, David preached of things which he believed and yet openly admitted he didn’t fully understand. This humility and recognition of our own limited understanding will make our witness the more compelling, rather than if we arrogantly give the impression of total knowledge.

71:11 *God has forsaken him* – David did indeed feel that God had forsaken him (22:1). David, like all of us, was very sensitive to what others said about him- for his many complaints at his being slandered reflect how significant it was for him. We must be secure in our relationship with God, so that others’ discounting of our relationship with Him don’t influence us.

71:18 David wanted to remain alive so that he could continue his work of teaching and preaching God’s grace and salvation to others. This too should be our purpose of living.

71:20 *Bring us up again from the depths of the earth*- David’s hope was clearly in the resurrection of the body, which he may have deduced as necessary on reflection that he would see with his own eyes his Messiah son reigning for ever on his throne (2 Sam. 7:16).

71:22 *I will praise you... I sing praise to You*- David imagines how after the resurrection at his future glorification, he *will*, at that future time, praise God; and yet he says he praises God *now*. We have here an example of living the Kingdom life now. In New Testament terms, this is how we can “have eternal life” now, even though we shall die; for we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live, the Kingdom life.

72 *A Psalm for Solomon*- These are David’s prophetic desires for his son, and yet clearly they have reference to the Kingdom of Christ rather than Solomon, even though the Psalm has a limited fulfilment in Solomon. The promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 stated that the son of David would also be son of God, and David would eternally live in the presence of his great descendant, who would reign eternally from David’s throne. It seems that David came to see these promises as having hope of fulfilment in his son Solomon, although the New Testament is clear that their main fulfilment is in Christ (Lk. 1:31-35). Thus David lost his focus upon the future Messiah because of his obsession with his son Solomon; and Solomon was damaged by this in that his spirituality and works for God were a living out of parental expectation, but at the end of his life he turned away to other gods and according to Ecclesiastes, lost all hope of a future Kingdom of God on earth. This Psalm however remains a wonderful prophecy of Christ’s future Kingdom, based around the land of Israel and His rulership in Jerusalem.

72:8 In Solomon’s time, the territory of Israel was larger than at any other time.

72:10 Fulfilled by the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings 10).

72:13,14 Solomon perhaps consciously tried to fulfil this in his gracious judgment between the two prostitutes (1 Kings 3:16-28); but later in his reign, his bitterness and selfishness led him to abuse his people (1 Kings 12:4). Thus Solomon by his own behaviour disallowed himself from fulfilling this Kingdom prophecy.

72:17 *Men shall be blessed in him*- Fulfilled in how those baptized “in Christ” become Abraham’s seed and receive the blessing of God’s grace and forgiveness (Acts 3:25,26; Gal. 3:27-29).

73:17 Asaph as a temple servant would have had access to the altar, which was plated with the censers of those sinners who had rebelled against God in the desert (Num. 16:38). There the earth suddenly opened and swallowed them up- alluded to in :18,19. Looking at those plates, he saw that finally judgment does come to the wicked, and even those who appear to die in peace will ultimately be judged. The apparent prosperity of the wicked and the way that they don’t always receive judgment in this life simply deepens our faith in the reality of a judgment to come, at which the wicked will be resurrected and judged for their actions in this life. Seeing that God judges sin, and yet sinners don’t always get judged in this life, forces us to this understanding- which is in any case presented specifically in the Bible. Asaph admits throughout the Psalm that his jealousy of the wealthy and prosperous sinners had eaten him up to the point of obsession and spiritual destruction; but he came to his senses by realizing the reality of future judgment. That basic doctrine should mean the same for us too.

74:9 This statement is strange seeing that there were prophets at the time when the temple was burnt by the Babylonians (:7)- not least Jeremiah, who had prophesied that Judah would be in captivity for 70 years (Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10). Daniel too appears not to have been immediately aware of Jeremiah’s prophecies (Dan. 9:2). There are times when God’s people seem not to have been in much contact with each other even though they lived near each other- Melchizedek and Abraham are an example. The dysfunction and division we see within the church is lamentable and wrong, but these things happen, and the divided parties still remain God’s people- just as Asaph and Jeremiah were.

74:12 This Psalm is a record of how Asaph reasoned with himself. The destruction of the temple by the Babylonians meant that he felt God had totally and permanently rejected His people; and yet he takes comfort in the wonders God has done for His people in the past (:13-15). As a member of God’s people he felt that those historical wonders had in a sense been done to him too- hence he reflects that “Yet God is my King of old”. In times when the apparent distance and silence of God is so unbearable, we have to remember what He has done for us and for His people in the past. We can also reflect that the ongoing wonders of creation, the sun’s rising and setting, is a sign that God is in fact constantly active (:16,17), even if He’s not active for us in the ways we desperately want.

75:7 *God is the judge. He puts down one, and lifts up another*- We shouldn’t think that God isn’t watching this world, and will only open the books and consider everything when Christ returns. The judgment is ongoing, right now we are standing before Him and He is judging; the future judgment day will be the revelation of the judgments He has already reached as He watched our faith and behaviour in this life.

75:8 *A cup*- See on 60:3.

76:1 Judah and Israel are often paralleled. Judah refers to the two tribe kingdom based around the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and the half tribe of Manasseh; which Israel refers to the ten tribe kingdom. This division of God’s people was a tragedy; and yet from God’s perspective they were one, hence His frequent parallel of them. All divisions within the body of Christ are likewise only real from an earthly perspective; God sees His people as one, as we should.

76:3 This reference to a dramatic military victory by God in the Jerusalem area and the subsequent plundering of the invaders, resulting in the neighbouring kings bringing presents to Jerusalem (:11) is all relevant to the situation when the Assyrians were destroyed by God at the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 32:23).

77:10 *I will appeal to this*- The faithful have always known God as a God open to dialogue. Asaph feels that God has as it were forgotten His graciousness (:9), and so He appeals to God to remember how in the past He saved His people at the Red Sea, even though they were spiritually weak at the time. He thus appeals to God’s consistent love for His people as a basis for requesting God to act again in gracious salvation. If God has acted with His right hand over history, why not now? There was no unquestioning submission to the Almighty God as required by Islam and some legalistic forms of Christianity; rather do God’s people respectfully engage Him in dialogue and struggle with Him in prayer.

78:9,10 Israel turned back in the day of battle, they lost their confidence and nerve, because “they didn’t keep God’s covenant”. Keeping the covenant had an effect upon the crises of life. And keeping it was not a matter of mere outward obedience, it was rather a state of the heart. Thus “their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in His covenant” (:37). The covenants / promises made to Abraham and David above all take a grip upon the heart- and we have to keep remembering that those same covenants are made with all who are in Christ as they are the basis of the Gospel (Gal. 3:8).

78:18,19 Their attitudes to God in their hearts became verbalized in words. How we think about God is so important; we could say that spiritual mindedness is the essence of what Christianity is about.

78:22 *They didn’t believe in God*- Israel weren’t atheists; but by not trusting that He will ultimately save us, we are effectively atheistic.

78:28 *Around their dwelling places*- We see here the sensitivity of God, not only giving them food but bringing it right to their door. That they and so many others should have become bitter with a God of such gentle grace and kindness is indeed tragic.

78:30 Like a parent giving in to the unwise requests of a child just because they love the child, so God gave Israel the food they craved. Yet giving in to lust or wrong desire doesn’t make it go away; Israel were given their desire (:29) but their craving remained. In our battles with temptation, let us never reason that if we give in, the lust will go away. It’s simply not true. The very experience of sin makes the next sin even easier and the voice of conscience yet weaker.

78:31 *Killed some of their fattest*- It was the fat ones who were complaining they were perishing from hunger and that God was somehow unreasonable to His children. God had obviously provided very well for them with the manna; but this wasn’t enough to satisfy their endless craving to tickle their taste buds and ever be titillating their fancy with something new.

78:49 *Angels of evil*- God’s Angels don’t sin (Lk. 20:35,36 cp. Rom. 6:23). They are *all* doing His work (103:19-21; Heb. 1:14); there is no sin before God’s presence in Heaven (Hab. 1:13). The text here in 78:49 doesn’t speak of ‘sinful Angels’, but rather Angels responsible for bringing “evil” in the sense of calamity or disaster. We are often reminded that God brings the good and also creates “evil” in this sense (Is. 45:5-7). And He does it through His Angels. The reference in the context here is to the plagues God brought on Egypt; the work of the “Angels of evil” refers to the killing of the firstborn sons of Egypt by the Lord’s Angel.

78:54 *Had purchased*- It had as it were cost God something to give Israel the Kingdom or “mountain”. The same Hebrew word occurs in 74:2 and Gen. 14:22. The cost of our redemption, our place in the Kingdom, was the precious blood of Christ with which we were “bought” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18,19). God who knows the future is outside of our kind of time, and so in a sense, Christ was as it were the lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). His pain and sacrifice started right from the beginning, and when He offered Israel the forgiveness and Kingdom which He did, this offer was not without pain and immense cost to Him. Their rejection of it was therefore even more tragic and painful for Him.

79:8 *Don’t hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us*- Ez. 18 criticizes the Jews at the time of the destruction of the temple (:1) for complaining that their sufferings were because of their fathers’ sins, and God rejoins that this wasn’t the case, He was punishing that generation for their actual personal sins. But Asaph was under the impression that his generation were relatively innocent; likewise his complaint that he doesn’t know “how long” the sufferings would last appears to reveal an ignorance of Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10. See on 74:9. We can get some things wrong, be wilfully ignorant of others in our self-justification; and yet still be counted by God as faithful, just as Asaph was. And we must remember this in managing our irritations with others’ spiritual immaturity.

79:9 Because of how God is, as revealed in His Name of Yahweh, because mercy and forgiveness are paramount within the texture of His very personality which His Name reveals (Ex. 34:4-6)… therefore, we should repent. Reflection on the Name inspired Asaph’s faith in forgiveness and thus helped his repentance. It did the same for David (25:11) and for Jeremiah (Jer. 14:7,21), and it can do so for us too. Because God’s Name proclaims God as above all merciful and forgiving, therefore we should repent and ask for forgiveness.

80:9 *You cleared the land for it*- Potentially, God drove out all the nations in the land of Canaan so that the vine of Israel could grow there without contamination and be spiritually fruitful. But in fact Israel failed to drive out many of the tribes and they remained to be a spiritual thorn to Israel’s spirituality. In potential, so much was made possible, just as it is for God’s people today; but it requires us to go and realize that potential in faith.

80:12 *Why have You broken down its walls*- Surely Asaph knew that the nations around the borders of Israel had been allowed by God to invade because of Judah’s sinfulness. Asaph in several Psalms appears to underestimate the seriousness of Judah’s sin and the rightness and necessity of God’s judgment, despite the prophets of his time making these things crystal clear. Yet for all his misunderstanding and wilful ignorance, he still displays faith and God worked with him and inspired the recording of his Psalms. For all *our* ignorance and misunderstandings [and those of others amongst God’s people], God still hears our prayers.

81:5 *I heard a language that I didn’t know*- God of course understands every language and thought of man, including Egyptian. Yet He so identifies with His people that He speaks from their limited perspective. He has the ability to see and feel life from our viewpoint here on earth. He isn’t therefore distant from us.

81:11 God (“me”) is paralleled with His voice; if we disregard His word, this is our attitude to Him. We can’t divorce our relationship with Him from our relationship with His word. True believers can therefore be nothing but Bible lovers and searchers.

81:14 *I would quickly have*- We have in these verses the amazing fact that God knows all possible futures; He knew all the things that would have happened if they had been obedient- and He often mentions this in the prophets. In this we have another window into the pain and tragedy of God. We mourn more for those who die young than for those who die in fulfilled old age, because we think of all that might have been. And so it is for God, to an infinitely greater extent. He planned even to give Israel fine wheat as well as manna, and honey as well as water out of the smitten rock (:16); but Israel would not. And yet God continues to plan all kinds of intricate and wonderful possible futures for each of us; and individually and collectively we as His beloved people so often don’t enable them to happen because of our short term, faithless attitudes.

82:6 *You are gods*- The Hebrew word *elohim* means ‘mighty ones’; sometimes it is translated “God”, other times it refers to men, in this case the sinful judges of Israel (:1,7). When the Jews falsely accused Jesus of making Himself God, He denied it by quoting this verse. His point was ‘In the Old Testament, men are called God; I’m only saying I’m the *Son* of God, so what’s your problem?’ (Jn. 10:34,35). He not only denied being God Himself in any Trinitarian sense; He thus demonstrated that the term “God” can be applied to men, and even if it is used about Him, it doesn’t make Him God Himself in person.

83:13 *Like chaff before the wind*- The language of Dan. 2:35,44 about the destruction of the ten toes of the image, representing Israel’s latter day enemies, at Christ’s return. Psalm 83 likewise features ten nations who will be bound together against Israel and then be dramatically destroyed by direct Divine intervention. It is tempting to equate these ten nations with the ten toes of the image of Dan. 2, and the ten horns of the latter day beast which we meet in Daniel and Revelation. These ten nations are geographically located in the peoples which currently surround the state of Israel, and the rhetoric they are prophesied as using is exactly the same as that used by the Palestinians and Israel’s Arab enemies. The situation around Israel is therefore a sure sign that Christ will soon return.

83:16 *That they may seek Your name*- The latter day judgments against Israel’s enemies, like all God’s judgments, are so that those nations may repent and come to relationship with God; they aren’t a mere outbreak of anger from an exasperated God.

84:10 Just one day in God’s presence would be better than thousands of days lived in this present world; and yet the wonder of it all is that we shall live eternally with God in His Kingdom. 2 Pet. 3:8 alludes here.

85:4 Although God had potentially turned from His anger (:3), Israel still had to turn to God to make this come true in their personal experience.

85:10 *Mercy and truth*- Somehow it seems that both individually and collectively we cannot achieve this fusion. We are either too soft and compromise and lose the Faith, or we are too hard and lose the spirit of Christ, without which we are "none of His" (Rom. 8:9). The result of this is that whenever God’s Truth is revived, that community is in a sense born to roll downhill; after two or three generations the Truth is lost. Either they destroy themselves through bitter subdivision, or they compromise with error and lose the Faith. Perhaps it is God's plan that no one community should hold the Faith through many generations. But the challenge of showing "grace and truth" in our thinking and judging, even though we cannot fully achieve it; and in the process we are led to appreciate more the beauty and wonder of the way in which these two concepts are linked together in the Father and His Son, and to yearn more to perceive and enter into the glory of God's Name, which totally incorporates these two humanly opposed aspects (Ex. 34:6,7; Rom. 11:22).

86:3 There are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not just something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray always" (Lk. 21:36) in the last days likewise connects prayer with watchfulness, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer in no sense refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

86:14 God of course knew all this, but part of the healing therapy of prayer is that we verbalize our situations and tell God about them.

87:5 This verse and the whole Psalm may refer to the way that the judgment throne of Christ will be established in Jerusalem, and therefore all those who will live eternally will have in that sense been born again there, in that they began the physical experience of immortal life in that city.

88:2 It’s an amazing thought that the words of our prayers enter into God’s personal presence. This was symbolized by the way the incense (representing prayer, Rev. 8:3,4) burnt in the holy place permeated into the Most Holy Place.

88:9 *I have spread out my hands to You*- This is a good physical posture to adopt in our prayers, signifying as it does our openness to God’s answer, whatever it may be; and the openness of our heart to Him.

88:10 The faithful Psalmist knew that death was unconsciousness; he wanted to remain alive so as to keep on praising God. And this should also be our very reason for being alive.

88:13 *In the morning*- Starting each day in prayer is a vital spiritual habit of the spiritually successful person. How we start the day affects how that day proceeds spiritually.

89:2 We often doubt God’s love and whether He will really keep His covenant with us. Yet the very existence of creation, that it’s not been destroyed despite human sin, should be a constant reminder to us of God’s faithfulness- if we let ourselves perceive it.

89:12 This shows how God reckons the points of the compass with reference to Jerusalem; He is believer-centric, so central are we to His thinking. We are never forgotten by Him.

89:20 *I have found David My servant*- God is in search of man; this is a repeated theme of the prophets (Hos. 9:10; Dt. 32:1; Is. 50:2; 65:1,2; 66:4). So it’s not us as it were reaching out to God; He is fervently reaching out to us, and we have to come to realize that. We don’t so much as find God, as realize that He already is earnestly with us. And yet we of course feel that we are or have been searching for God, for the ultimate Truth. Yet God is searching for us; in conversion to Christ, God and man meet in a profound way; for there, in Christ, God finds us and we find Him.

89:26-32 This is clearly a commentary on the promises to David concerning his great descendant, who was also to be God’s Son (2 Sam. 7:12-16). They were fulfilled in Christ (Lk. 1:31-35). The fact Christ called God “my God” and God was His salvation, His saviour from death through resurrection, is all more evidence that the Trinitarian understanding of Jesus is wrong. Jesus wasn’t God Himself in person.

89:35 The promises God makes involve a solemn commitment by Him to us- the serious, binding nature of His oath to us is easy to forget. God swore to David “by My holiness”. The Hebrew for “holiness” is the same word translated “dedication”. David’s response to God’s dedication to him was to dedicate [s.w.] all the silver and gold which he had won from this world, to the service of God’s house (1 Kings 7:51; 1 Chron. 26:26; 2 Chron. 5:1). Our response to God’s dedication to us should be a like dedication of what we have to Him. Covenant relationship with God requires much of both Him and us.

89:52 *Blessed be Yahweh forever*- Despite all the doubts about God expressed in this Psalm, the faithful writer is still committed to thanking and praising God. His apparent silence in specific areas of our lives shouldn’t ever stop us from praising Him for who He is.

90:1 There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the God is essentially mutual. We dwell in God, and He dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). Thus "he that lives in love lives in God, and God in him " (1 Jn. 4:15,16).

90:10 This is one of many Biblical reasons for understanding the urgency of our need to devote our time to the Lord and not fritter it away. We must number our days, realize their number is only 70 years, and therefore apply our hearts unto wisdom (:10 cp. :12). "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (Prov. 4:7).

90:13 *Relent-* Moses several times persuaded God to change His stated purpose concerning Israel, and here once again he is trying to persuade God not to allow the rebellious generation of Israel to perish in the wilderness. The prayer wasn’t answered, but it’s a fine example of someone very intimate with God pleading with Him to change His mind.

91:1 This Psalm is connected with Ps. 90, and appears to also be part of that prayer of Moses. It’s especially addressed to Joshua, who during the wilderness journey lived in the tabernacle (Ex. 33:11), and was one of the few who survived the judgment of the unfaithful generation dying in the wilderness. The situation in :3-7 describes how one by one, that generation died in the wilderness, but Joshua was preserved because he had believed that Israel could inherit the promised land.

91:11,12 Jesus was tempted to misinterpret these words as meaning that whatever He did from whatever motives, God would somehow preserve Him (Mt. 4:6). Temptation is very subtle; for the believer, misusing God’s words in order to justify whatever we feel like doing in the heat of a moment is a common form of temptation. This Psalm was encouragement to Joshua (see on :1), the Hebrew form of ‘Jesus’; so it’s understandable that Jesus would’ve been especially aware of these words.

91:14 Joshua (see on :1) was preserved because he believed that God would really give His people the promised Kingdom; but this faith is here described as loving God and knowing His Name. Joshua wanted Israel to inherit the Kingdom because he loved God, not because he wanted any personal benefit for himself. We see here how the New Testament triad of faith, hope and love were all interwoven within the character of Joshua.

92:2 A regular regime of morning and evening ‘quiet time’ with God is so important; spiritual life is really all about having the right habits.

93:1 A proof that God will not destroy the earth but will be faithful to His covenant purpose to establish His eternal Kingdom here. Just as the earth stands firm for ever, so does God’s word of promise (:5).

94:1 David sees Yahweh as the God of revenge, the one alone to whom vengeance belongs. Our response to this is to believe that truly vengeance is God’s and therefore we will not avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). I take this to apply to all the micro-level ‘takings of vengeance’ which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others.

94:9 One implication of believing that we were created by God as a special, purposefully designed creation is that we will believe that God sees and knows all things; the designer of the eyes and ears which we have 24/7 can surely see and hear everything going on in our lives.

94:12 True hearkening to the word is a chastening experience. It isn't easy; not as easy as reading a book called the Bible and going through the process of interpretation. Our sufferings make sense and are worked through by God insofar as we are open to and aware of His word; for they are designed to assist us in our being conformed to His word.

95:7 The urgency of hearing “today” applied to Israel in the wilderness, to the community at the time of Ps. 95, and to the first century believers to whom it is applied specifically in Heb. 3:7,15; 4:7. The urgency of the call continues to our “today”. God’s word has a unique way of speaking to us in a kind of eternal present; as if we were there in the wilderness, in the time of Ps. 95, and in the first century church.

96:6 Idols are characterized here as being ultimately unable to create anything. Whilst we may not be tempted to worship literal idols, we have many other potential idols in our lives which take us away from God- endless surfing the internet, involvement in social networking, following sport and celebrities, making money, absorbing hobbies. These are uncreative, ultimately; serving God is the only truly creative thing we can do with our lives.

96:10 *Say among the nations*- The Psalmist was intent on preaching to the Gentiles. See on 18:49.

96:13 Applied to Christ’s return in judgment in Acts 17:31.

97:7 *Worship Him, all you gods*- Here as often in the Psalms, the language presupposes that the gods / idols of the nations are real and living, but Yahweh’s greatness is such that effectively they have no power or significance. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that these gods / idols had no real existence. The same principle is used in the way the New Testament speaks about demons, who were also associated with idols (1 Cor. 10:20,21). They are spoken of as if they have some real existence, but the evident power of God in Christ’s miracles was such that they were effectively declared as having no real existence or at best being powerless and insignificant.

98:3 The “salvation” spoken of in :1-3 isn’t God’s saving of Himself, but His salvation of His people through Jesus [the Hebrew form of ‘Jesus’ means ‘Yah’s salvation]. It is our personal experience of that salvation which should be the witness which persuades the Gentile world to praise Him. It was God’s intention that His salvation of His people from Egypt would have this effect; but Israel despised that salvation, in their hearts reversed it by constantly wanting to return to Egypt, and so they didn’t declare His salvation and so the Gentiles didn’t hear. We can’t keep our experience of salvation to ourselves; we will declare it to the whole world if we really grasp the wonder of it all.

99:4 *You execute justice and righteousness*- This is the language of judgment, whereby a judge ‘establishes’ principles. The fact God is enthroned means that He is our constant judge and we are always living our lives before His ongoing judgment. His throne is a throne of judgment, so whenever man is before God- which is always- He is our insistent judge, right now.

99:7 *They kept His testimonies*- This is in the context of the time when Israel were in the wilderness and God spoke to them in the cloud. They didn’t keep His law then, as the prophets and historical record make clear. The Psalmist is reflecting how God imputed righteousness to His people at this time (Num. 23:21), just as He does for us who cross the Red Sea of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

100:3 The fact that God Himself created us, as His sheep, “and not we ourselves” (a comment applicable, in essence, to theories of atheistic evolution) should lead us to ecstatic singing of praise before Him. Likewise 96:2,5, and so many other examples, invite us to enthusiastically praise God, simply because “the Lord made the heavens”. God as creator results in joy and praise amongst those of His creation who recognize Him as creator.

101:3 *I will set no vile thing before my eyes*- The context is David speaking of how he strove to be spiritually minded, and he realized that our thoughts are influenced by what we see or watch. These ancient words are so relevant to us who live in the internet generation, where we can privately view many ‘vile things’ with our eyes. If we want to be spiritually minded, then what we allow ourselves to view must be consciously controlled.

102:13 *The set time has come*- The Psalmist is writing maybe in captivity in Babylon as the predicted 70 years of Judah’s captivity there came to a close, and he looks forward to the promised restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem.

102:16 *Yahweh has built up Zion*- He had not then done so (:13)- the earlier part of the Psalm laments this. But the Psalmist believed in God’s prophecies of doing so, and considered them as good as already fulfilled. Faith is all about adopting God’s perspective, seeing future promises as if they have already been fulfilled, thereby enabling us to live the Kingdom life now in its essence.

102:25 The language of laying foundations is nearly always used about the laying of the foundations of the new, rebuilt temple at the time of return from exile (Ezra 3:10-12; 5:16; Is. 44:28; Hag. 2:18; Zech. 4:9; 8:9); and this is the context of this Psalm (see on :13 and :16). The ‘heavens and earth’ refer to Israel (Is. 1:2) and the temple. Although they had ‘perished’ in the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the first temple, God remained and would, the Psalmist believed, install a new temple system (as outlined in Ez. 40-48). However, this never quite happened as God intended due to Judah’s weakness, and so these prophecies were reapplied to how the entire Jewish system based around the temple and Law of Moses would ‘perish’ and God’s new temple system based around the exalted Lord Jesus would come into existence (Heb. 1:10 and context).

103:2 The Hebrew translated “benefits” is also translated “praise”. The things God gives us are therefore imperatives in themselves to praise Him. Giving thanks before meals is a wonderful habit to get into. As we receive His gifts, or more to the point, *perceive* the receipt of them, the heart breaks forth into a deep thankfulness. This is the true praise.

103:20,21 The emphasis is that *all* the Angels are obedient to God and do His will (Heb. 1:14). There aren’t two groups of Angels, some good and some sinful. God tolerates no sin in His presence in Heaven (Hab. 1:13). Sin brings death and yet the Angels cannot die, therefore they cannot sin; our hope is to be made like them in this sense after the resurrection at Christ’s return (Lk. 20:35,36). See 148:2.

103:22 *Praise Yahweh, my soul*- David sees himself as in league with the Angels, who likewise are all praising God (:20,21).

104:4 *His Angels winds*- The Hebrew word translated “wind” is that translated “spirit”. God’s Spirit works in many ways, but one of those ways is through His Angels. If we were to ask how, mechanically as it were, God’s Spirit operates, how He is everywhere present, how He does things- the answer to some extent is that He achieves all these things through His armies of Angels.

104:20 *You make darkness*- The rising and setting of the sun is a conscious expenditure of energy by God, rather than happening by some clockwork mechanism which God set up and then withdrew from. He consciously makes the grass grow (:14), and consciously feeds the animals (:28). Likewise the water cycle is not mere clockwork, unstoppable natural law; the rivers are sent forth consciously by God as they bubble over the rocks (:10). This view of creation means that it’s easier to believe that the God who consciously does these things every moment can intervene in them at any time in any way; we aren’t the helpless victims of a nature which has a life and will of her own.

104:29 *You take away their breath: they die, and return to the dust*- The Hebrew words for “breath” and “spirit” are the same. God made man from the dust and put into him the breath or spirit of life (Gen. 2:7). When we die, that spirit, that life force, returns to God and our bodies to the dust. There is no conscious survival of death, no inherent immortality within man. Life and immortality have only been revealed to some men through the Gospel of Christ and the hope of resurrection to immortality which there is in Him (Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10). All theories or hopes of reincarnation are disallowed by Bible teaching about the nature of man.

105:17-23 In the context of the Psalm, God is comforting Israel that all their sufferings had been experienced by Joseph. Israel as a nation are often spoken of as being in prison in a Gentile world (Ps. 79:11; 102:20; Is. 42:7,22; 49:9); just as Joseph was. Prison and death are often associated because a spell in prison was effectively a death sentence, so bad were the conditions. Israel being in prison is therefore a symbol of a living death. Just as God had delivered Joseph, so God’s people are to take comfort that when the right time comes, we too will be delivered from our present oppression.

105:18 This highlights the mental aspects of Joseph's suffering. The Hebrew for “hurt” means 'to browbeat or depress'; thus his soul was in iron, trapped, oppressively boxed in as he lay in the darkness. Joseph was in this situation until the determined time came for God to suddenly deliver him thanks to the unexpected word from a king; and so Judah, depressed in Babylon, were being comforted that when the predicted 70 years captivity were ended, they too would be likewise delivered- which came true in the decree of king Cyrus for them to return to their land with his every blessing.

105:19 God has arranged our lives according to a pattern; we have specific times in our lives for various situations. Looking back at the Biblical record of Joseph and Moses, whose life was divided clearly into three periods of 40 years, we see this clearly; but it’s of course harder to discern in our own lives as we are still living through it. But God is in control and has a plan for us, desiring only our eternal good in our latter end.

105:37 *There was not one feeble person among His tribes*- Amazingly, there was nobody sick amongst the three million or so who left Egypt that night. At our exodus from this world through our Red Sea baptism into Christ, we are made spiritually strong- and must abide in that strength.

105:45 *That they might keep His statutes*- The whole purpose of being in the Kingdom is so that we might be perpetually obedient to God’s word; this is the core reason for our wanting to be there.

106:3 *At all times*- Consistency is most important in spiritual life rather than occasional flashes of devotion and obedience.

106:5 *That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen*- The Psalmist’s desire for salvation wasn’t merely because he or she wanted to live eternally. There was a desire to see all God’s people glorying in salvation. Salvation is made possible in that God’s people as a whole have been redeemed; there is such a thing as spiritual selfishness, desiring the Kingdom merely for what it means to us. But if we have the perspective of God’s glory, we will desire the coming of salvation because all of us will be glorified. Hence Paul could say that the joy he would have in the Kingdom would be related to his joy that his brethren were also there (1 Thess. 2:19).

106:6 Continuing the thought of :5, the Psalmist felt that he personally was somehow involved in the sin of God’s people (“*we* have sinned”). We aren’t called to smug self righteousness, but rather we are to feel a personal involvement in the failures and successes of God’s people as a whole.

106:7 *Even at the Red Sea*- Even at the very moment of their salvation they were rebellious. God didn’t save them because they had reached a certain level of righteousness, but because of His grace. The Red Sea crossing represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2); God has saved us by His grace, not because of our righteousness.

106:15 *But sent leanness into their soul*- If we fulfil our fleshly craving, we will become internally and spiritually hungry. Giving in to our cravings isn’t the way to happiness.

106:37 Demons refer to idols (:36). Demons or idols have no real existence (1 Cor. 8:4; 10:20). Therefore when we read of demons being cast out in the Gospel records, this is the language of the day used for healing various illnesses rather than any evidence that demons actually exist.

107:4 *They found no city to live in*- The LXX of this phrase is quoted about us in Heb. 13:14. We too are on a wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism, and find no place we can call home in that journey. Our place of rest and settling down isn’t in this life, but in the Kingdom which is to come at Christ’s return. The implication could be that Israel wanted to settle in the wilderness. They didn’t want to return to Egypt (although they did at times), they didn’t really desire the unknown promised land… so, they wanted to just settle down there in the wilderness. And so it can be with us. We can be happy with the way to the Kingdom, it can be that the social aspect of the Christian life suites us… we are content with it, and yet it can be that for all that, we lack a real sense of direction towards the Kingdom. We are going some place. The Christian life is but a path leading towards an end, and the end destination is the Kingdom. If we believe surely that we will be there, we will live lives which reflect this sense of concrete direction and aim.

107:9 Mary quoted this verse about how she had been filled with good things (Lk. 1:53); but Zacharias quoted the next verse, :10, shortly afterwards (Lk. 1:79). Surely Mary had gotten him thinking in the same paths as she did. Our spirituality can influence others positively, consciously and unconsciously. This is why it’s important to mix in spiritual company.

107:11 *Condemned the counsel of the Most High*- This is one of a number of Biblical verses which suggest that we as it were stand in judgment upon God when we encounter His word. He overcomes every claim that His word is untrue and therefore He is condemned (Rom. 3:4). That we mere humans should judge God the judge of all is an arresting concept; but this is what we are in effect doing when we consider His claims, His promises of saving us which are throughout His word.

107:30 The idea of God stilling a storm and getting terrified sailors immediately to their port clearly had fulfilment in how Christ stilled the storm on the lake of Galilee (Jn. 6:18-21). This doesn’t mean that He is God Himself, but rather that Old Testament statements about God were fulfilled in His Son, who manifested the Father to perfection.

108:13 The structure of the Psalm is significant in that it begins with praise and then goes on to desperately plead for God’s action. There is an intentional double meaning in the Hebrew word translated “hear”; it is also translated “answer”. There should be real comfort for us in knowing that prayer really is ‘heard’; the hearing is, in a sense, the answer / response, with which a man should be content. Therefore David desired to praise God even before the answer was received; the knowledge God was really hearing him gave such confidence (see too 109:30). We aren’t to hide behind the excuse that unanswered prayer just means that God has heard but not answered.

109:6 *An adversary*- The Hebrew word translated “adversary” here is *satan*. ‘Satan’ is simply a Hebrew word meaning an adversary, totally neutral in meaning; it doesn’t of itself refer to any sinful being.

109:8 This is quoted about Judas in Acts 1:20. The disciples saw the similarities with Judas and then decided to concretely take action according to those similarities- they proactively decided to find someone to take his place as this verse requires. We need to use the Bible in this same way- see the similarities between our situations and Biblical precedents, and then act on them accordingly.

109:30 See on 108:13.

110:1 This verse is quoted in Mt. 22:44 and Acts 2:34,35 with the understanding that David’s “lord” or master was Jesus, who was bidden sit in Heaven at His right hand after His resurrection, declared a priest for us in the order of Melchizedek, until He returns to earth to be King in Jerusalem (“Zion”) and destroy all God’s enemies.

110:2 *Rule in the midst of your enemies*- This supports the impression we get from Psalm 2, that when Christ returns He will establish His Kingdom but there will initially be opposition to Him, and the nations will gather together against Him, surrounding Jerusalem (cp. Rev. 20:9). It’s amazing how much humanity wants to carry on as it is, with all their religions, and not be disturbed by the intervention of God in their lives. And this feature of our world will be revealed in their attitudes to Christ at His return.

110:3 The exhortation of Ps. 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in "holy attire" because He has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled.

110:4 This is repeatedly applied to Christ (Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,17,21). The priests were from the tribe of Levi, whereas Christ was from Judah. Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem and yet also a priest; but he wasn’t a Levite. He is therefore chosen as an appropriate type of Christ, the ultimate king-priest. This argument is deployed in Hebrews to answer the Jewish objection that Christ can’t be a priest because He wasn’t a Levite.

111:5 God is thinking about the covenant made with us all the time! And yet how often in daily life do we reflect upon the fact that we really are in covenant relationship with God... how often do we recollect the part we share in the promises to Abraham, how frequently do we feel that we really are in a personal covenant with God Almighty?

111:10 *Those who do His work have a good understanding*- There is an upward spiral in spirituality. The more we do God’s work, the more we will come to understand Him. The very process of working with Him reveals more of Him to us.

112:5 *The man who deals graciously and lends*- Our generosity must reflect that of God, because “*He* has dispersed, *He* has given to the poor” (:9). His generosity to us is largely over matters in which we are responsible for the problem we end up in, and the deeper we realize this the less we will be tempted to be mean to others because we consider their poverty to be ‘their fault’.

112:9 *He has given to the poor*- Quoted in 2 Cor. 9:9 about how God has given His grace of forgiveness and salvation to us the spiritually poor. The Greek word for “grace” also means “gift”. In the context, Paul is urging the early Christians to be materially generous to their poorer brethren because of the grace they have received from God. His spiritual generosity to us is to be reflected in our material generosity to others (see on :5).

114:2 *Israel His kingdom*- Israel were declared God’s Kingdom on earth with Him as their King, exercising total sovereignty over them (Ex. 19:5,6). But they wanted a human king and worshipped other gods, so that God overturned that Kingdom with the intention to re-establish it on earth at Christ’s return to eternally reign on David’s throne in Jerusalem (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:6). The future Kingdom of God on earth will strictly speaking be a re-establishment of the Kingdom that once was, again inviting us to understand it as an entity to be literally established on *earth*. The Bible doesn’t teach that the righteous go to Heaven at death to enjoy their salvation there.

115:8 *Those who make them will be like them*- We become like what we worship. The Gentile idols are often described in the Bible as “vanities”; we may not worship literal idols but we can easily give our hearts over to obsession with the many vain things which crowd this world and the internet. If we do so, we will become as lost and lacking in direction as they are.

115:11 *Who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh*- The implication is that some believed in and feared Yahweh, but had yet to trust Him. We need likewise to convert our acceptance of God’s existence into practical faith in Him.

116:2 *Because He has turned His ear to me, therefore*- The experience of answered prayer is an upward spiral; because prayer is answered, we are inspired to pray the more.

116:11 *I said in my haste, “All men are liars”-* This verse likely strikes a chord with most of us; we have all likewise at times felt that relationships in this world are useless, nobody is to be trusted.

116:13 *I will take the cup of salvation*- This cup was an allusion to one of the cups used at the Passover. In response to all God has done for us, we likewise respond by taking the cup at the communion service. Although our feelings and situations vary each time we take that cup, one strand of motivation within us for doing it should be our desire to do so in gratitude for all the Lord has done for us spiritually and physically.

116:14 *In the presence of all His people*- As in :18, our devotion to God is to be expressed within the context of other believers. Out of church Christianity is a contradiction in terms; we cannot retreat into our own homes and consider we are Christians in the privacy of our hearts. Difficult as it often is, and notwithstanding all the dysfunctions of the church, the community of believers is to be the arena in which we make our response to God’s grace. Of course there may be multiple reasons why physical attendance at a literal gathering isn’t possible, all of which are appreciated by God, but so far as we can, we should in whatever way seek to be “in the presence of all His people”.

118:22 *The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner*- Quoted by Jesus about Himself in Mt. 21:42. The Jews were the “builders” (Acts 4:11) who rejected Christ by crucifying Him, but He resurrected to become the corner stone of the new spiritual temple which is being built (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6,7). Non-Christian religions cannot be the way to God because the foundation and critical point of our spiritual building can only be the resurrected Christ.

118:25 *Save us now*- ‘Hosanna’ is the Greek word for ‘Save now!’. This and :26 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh!” were quoted by the crowds in Mt. 21:9. They perceived Jesus as Messiah in the terms of this Psalm, but that same crowd were screaming “Crucify Him!” just days later. This is how fickle our nature is.

119:1 *Yahweh’s law*- Every verse in this Psalm contains some reference to God’s law. It is arranged according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to indicate how *our* words, our alphabet, our whole formulation of thought and verbalization, should be dominated by *God’s* word. It was also done in this way to aid memorization; for in illiterate societies, the Psalms would’ve been memorized. It’s a good thing for us to personally memorize parts of God’s word.

119:5 *Oh that my ways were steadfast to obey Your statutes*- This is one of many places in this Psalm (:136) where David laments his own failure to obey God’s word completely at all times. And yet the Psalm also speaks of the faithful as being totally obedient to God’s word, e.g. “they do nothing wrong” (:3). One resolution of this is that David believed in imputed righteousness, whereby God counts His people as totally obedient to His word even though they are not; Ps. 32:2 cp. Rom. 4:8 indicates David understood this principle well.

119:6 *Then I wouldn’t be ashamed when I obey all of Your commandments*- The result of moments or periods of obedience to God is that we become ashamed of all the times we are *not* obedient. Spiritual maturity thus involves an ever increasing awareness of our past sins; it doesn’t lead to self-righteousness but the very opposite.

119:11 *That I might not sin*- The presence of God’s word within our hearts gives strength against temptation, as demonstrated by Christ’s overcoming of the wilderness temptations by quoting from God’s word.

119:14 *As much as in all riches*- The Psalm often contrasts material wealth with the love of God’s law (:36, 72, 127). So many sell their souls to employers, taking demanding jobs or second jobs so as to get more money than they need. And inevitably they have little time or mental energy for the things of God’s word. Others lament their lack of wealth; but the simple truth is that the true riches are those of God’s word.

119:18 *Open my eyes*- In his search for spiritual mindedness, so often David in this Psalm asks God to directly work on his heart so that he might correctly understand God’s word and be obedient to it (:29 “Keep me”, :36 “Turn my heart”, :133 “establish my footsteps”). God hasn’t merely given us the Bible and left us to get on with the job of understanding and obeying it; He is eager to help us in those things.

119:27 David often makes this link between appreciation of God’s ways and the inevitable witness this will result in. The community of believers is not to simply amass intellectual, theological purity by Bible reading- it must be told forth to others.

119:33 *Teach me, Yahweh, the way of Your statutes; I will keep them*- The better we understand God’s word, the more empowered we are to obey it. Understanding and correct interpretation aren’t therefore merely of academic interest, or just for those interested in that kind of thing. By the same token, true understanding isn’t simply academic, it issues in practical obedience.

119:37 *Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things*- A prayer for our internet, entertainment mad, screen transfixed generation.

119:46 *Before kings*- This is one of several indications that parts of this Psalm reflects David’s feelings whilst at the court of Saul as a young man (:100, :161), whereby speaking up for God’s word could result in a javelin being thrown at him to kill him if he just happened to touch the conscience of the manic king Saul (1 Sam. 18:11).

119:48 David didn’t groan at the number of God’s commandments, struggling with a steel will to obey some of them; he so loved God that he asked God to show him more and more of those commandments. Often the verses of this Psalm imply that David sought to know more of God's requirements because they are designed to help us be more obedient to all of them in toto.

119:63 Even within the people of God, we must chose our friends well.

119:64 David didn’t see grace and law as opposed; rather he understood those commandments as ultimately reflective of God’s grace.

119:73 David realized that because he had been made in God's physical image he had a duty to be spiritually reformed in His moral image; and thus he sought strength to be obedient to God's will.

119:88 The whole purpose of our lives, and of our eternal living in God’s Kingdom, is to be obedient to God’s word. We should have that spirit in our lives now, therefore.

119:96 God’s law isn’t therefore a limitation which we resentfully have to accept, but rather the way to ultimate freedom. In New Testament terms, we changed masters at baptism; from sin to Christ, and through our bondage to Him we paradoxically find ultimate freedom.

119:105 *My feet... my path*- God’s word directs both our short term immediate decisions (“my feet”) and also our general direction in life (“my path”).

119:120 God is again paralleled with His word; our attitude to His word is our attitude to Him.

119:128 Accepting the truths of God’s word leads us to perceive and proactively reject that which is false, rather than simply accepting truth and being ambivalent to error.

119:130 There is no ‘light within’ us, our exposure to ultimate truth comes from God’s word.

119:140 Because the word is so pure, therefore we love it. Our acceptance of the Bible as Divinely inspired rather than a human document therefore encourages our obedience to it; if we continually doubt and question its truth, we will hardly be motivated to obedience.

119:143 So often David says that he refuses life’s crises to take him away from his meditation on God’s word.

119:160 In God’s word we see His judgments- how He judges and will judge. And in the wealth of Bible history we see examples of how these judgments have been articulated with men in practice. The final day of judgement shouldn’t therefore be a worrying mystery to us; we know how God will judge, for we have in the Bible His word, His judgments.

119:169 *Come near before You*- Prayer is described here as coming near to God- and yet God “is” near already (75:1). Prayer, therefore, is a way of making us realize the presence of the God who is always present.

120 *Song of Ascents*- These Psalms (120-134) were recited as the Israelite worshippers went ‘up’ to the temple to keep the feasts (122:2,3). However the word translated “Ascents” also means “Degrees”, and may well have been written by Hezekiah when the shadow on the sundial went ten degrees backward as a sign that God had healed him (2 Kings 20:11). In response to this, Hezekiah composed or rearranged songs for the temple worship (Is. 38:20). His sickness was at the same time as the Assyrian invasion, and therefore many of these songs allude to the situation at that time.

121:2 Belief in God as creator (rather than in atheistic evolution) inspires our faith in His ability to likewise creatively deliver us from the crises of our lives.

121:5 *Yahweh is your shade*- Alluding to how on the wilderness journey, God provided the pillar of cloud as a shade to Israel (105:39). Our lives are repeatedly described in the Bible as being like the wilderness journey towards the promised land. The allusion is also to how God was a shade or shadow to Hezekiah when the shadow on the sundial went backward (Is. 38:8); what He did for Hezekiah He can in essence do for all His people.

122:6 Jerusalem’s peace will only be when Christ reigns there on David’s throne over God’s Kingdom on earth; this is the day the faithful should daily plead for.

123:4 This scoffing likely referred to that of Rabshakeh outside the walls of Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah’s illness and Judah’s invasion (2 Kings 18:19-25).

125:3 This is amazing encouragement, echoed in 1 Cor. 10:13, that we will never be tested so hard that our sinning is inevitable. In the heat of temptation we persuade ourselves that our situations are too hard for us to endure and that we have no option given our humanity but to sin. But God here promises that He will never allow circumstances to be too great for our spiritual strength; we are left with no option but to accept full, total responsibility for our sins, with nobody and nothing to blame them on apart from ourselves.

130:3 God doesn’t keep a record or legal list of sins in the sense that He doesn’t hold them against us; it’s not that He as it were erases those parts of His ‘memory’, for His word is full of the memory of human sin which He has forgiven. The LXX is applied to each of us in 1 Cor. 13:5- we too are not to keep a record of others’ wrongs against us. God’s forgiveness of us is to be the template for our forgiveness of others. It’s not possible to forget them, in the sense that we have no power over our brain’s mechanism of forgetting; but we can forgive them in the sense that we do not count them any longer against the person.

132 The mutuality possible between God and man is brought out by the structure of several of the Psalms, in which God and David are shown to be involved in a dynamic, two way relationship. Consider this Psalm: A (:1,2) David swears to God; B (:3-5) What David swore; C (:6,7) Search for a dwelling place; D (:8) Prayer to enter into rest; E (:9) Prayer for priests; F (:9) Prayer for saints / holy ones; G (:10) Prayer for Messiah. This was responded to by God: A1 (:11) God swears to David; B1 (:11,12) What God swore; C1 (:13) Designation of the dwelling place; D1 (:14,15) Answer to prayer in D; 1 (:16) Answer to prayer in E; F1 (:16) Answer to prayer in F; G1 (:17,18) Answer to prayer in G.

135:13 God’s Name refers to His essential character, which is distinguished firstly by His grace and forgiveness (Ex. 34:4-6). This is unchanging; God isn’t going to turn around and show us another face as it were. His Name is paralleled here with His renown, the reputation He has developed throughout Biblical history by acting consistently with His essential character. The Name of God isn’t therefore simply the word Yahweh or Jehovah. That is far too simplistic; the pronunciation and transliteration of Hebrew letters one way or another is irrelevant compared to the essence of the Name itself.

135:14 This parallels the Lord judging His people with His feeling sorry for them. In this sense judgment to come is a comfort not a threat.

135:19,20 This parallels all Israel with the priestly family. As it was God’s intention that Israel were to develop into an entire nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to all discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should all teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), rather than just leave it to specialists.

136:8 In this hard and graceless world, we have only to look at the sun and moon, indeed at all of creation, to see God’s sensitive grace constantly active.

136:10 The death of the Egyptian firstborn and their army (:15) was a reflection of God’s grace to Israel. We may struggle with this but ultimately it is a challenge to our perceptions and understanding rather than any bad reflection against God (see 143:12). We are reminded of how the flood was brought to destroy the world of Noah’s day in order to save him (2 Pet. 2:5) so that he was as it were saved by that water just as the water of baptism saves us (1 Pet. 3:19-21).

136:23,24 Understood by Mary as having fulfilment in the birth of Christ as our ultimate deliverer (Lk. 1:48).

137:8,9 This extreme language may seem hard to square with the spirit of grace in the New Testament. However, vengeance upon God’s enemies is also taught in the New Testament, especially in Revelation. These words are applied in Rev. 18:8,21 to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Dan. 2:44, at His return. Another perspective to explore is that it may also be that the Psalmist’s attitude was simply wrong, even though the recording of these words was inspired. David likewise spoke words of great grace and also of bitter vengeance against his enemies; the experience of trauma and real evil in life usually makes the sufferer give vent to such extreme feelings.

138:8 *That which concerns me*- God has a specific plan for each of us, in the same way as He has given each of us specific talents (Mt. 25:15) and has specified “good works” for us to achieve in our lives (Eph. 2:10). On His part, God will likewise fulfil what He has planned uniquely and individually for each of us- in accordance with our response to the possibilities He has potentially enabled.

139:2 We are *now* in God's presence, and can't escape from it; and the presence of God is judgment language (Acts 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10). He not only sees and knows everything in our lives but is judging it too.

139:7-9 Jonah knew the Psalms; his prayer from inside the fish is packed with allusion to them. And yet he thought he could flee from God’s presence (Jonah 1:3)- even though these verses almost prophesy of Jonah, that nobody can flee from God’s presence; neither the sea itself nor geographical distance can hide from God. Jonah knew this. But he simply acted in a way diametrically opposed to that knowledge.  We read the same words he did, and are faced with the same choice as to whether we truly believe them or merely know them.

139:15,16 If this is the level of intention and planning which God put into us, we at least can draw the certain conclusion: life is not aimless. God has a purpose for us and we therefore ought to be living a purposeful life, not just drifting from experience to experience as in a half-conscious dream. God is focused upon us and we should be upon Him.

139:24 *Wicked way*- The Hebrew translated “wicked” also means ‘sorrow’ or ‘pain’. The way of sin, the path to quick pleasure, is in fact the way of pain and sorrow.

140:11 *An evil tongue*- The reference is not to the small piece of flesh within our mouths, but to an evil speaking *person*, paralleled with “the violent *man*”. But the tongue is put for the person because our words really are a reflection of who we are, in that our words ultimately reflect our hearts (Lk. 6:45) despite our best efforts to insist there’s a distance between our real self and our words. Ultimately there isn’t, for all our occasional posturing and hypocrisy. How we really think comes out in our words in the end, and so we are our tongue.

141:2 Prayer is likened to carefully prepared sacrifice, to painstakingly composed incense, beaten small, mixed in just the right proportions. The penalty for not making the incense properly was death. The lesson is that forethought will precede real prayer; it is an offering to God.

142:2 *I tell Him my troubles*- It’s therapeutic to tell God our life situation, saying it out loud or writing it down as David did. We know that He already knows, but this exercise is good because it enables *us* to feel we have opened up before Him. The chronic, existential loneliness of people today could be solved by this opening up to God.

142:4 *No one cares for my soul*- This was indeed how David felt and perhaps it was really so; and yet he recognized that there were a group of people in existence called “the righteous” (:7). Even if we feel none of God’s people are helping us as they should, it doesn’t mean they aren’t God’s people or that nobody at all is righteous apart from us.

143:10 *Your Spirit is good; lead me*- David felt very strongly that he was being led, and he was confident that although he didn’t understand exactly where he was going in the short term, God is fundamentally good and wishes us only good in our latter end. The “spirit” here may refer to an Angel (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7), whom David felt was leading him in his wilderness life under persecution from Saul (:3) just as an Angel led Israel in the wilderness.

143:12 The death of David’s enemies was seen by him as God’s “kindness”. See on 136:10.

144:1,2 *My rock... my fortress, my high tower*- There are references in the historical record to how David took refuge from Saul (:3) and other enemies in these things (1 Sam. 23:29; 2 Sam. 5:7,9). But David saw that the essence of his safety was not in them but in God. We may use medicines, doctors, insurance, emergency phone numbers... but the essence is that God is our saviour, even if He works through those things.

144:12 David must have shocked many by singing of how our sons shall be as plants and our daughters as corner stones. For the corner stones of a family were perceived to be the male head of the family. The Biblical view of women always sharply contrasted with that of the surrounding world at the time; such is God’s valuing of each of His children regardless of their gender or perception within society.

145:1 *You my God as the King*- David was king of Israel, but that meant little to him compared to the greatness of God’s sovereign Kingship. It may be that we are exalted a little bit in life, in career, social standing or even respect amongst God’s people. An awareness of God’s greatness will keep this in perspective for us; we will see it as nothing compared to God’s exaltation and our subsequent smallness.

145:5 *Of Your wondrous works, I will meditate*- The rest of this Psalm speaks of David enthusiastically telling others about these things. But the motivation for preaching, the impetus for overcoming the inertia we often face in raising spiritual subjects in conversation, is our personal meditation of these things, of telling ourselves within our own self-talk of God’s greatness and the things of His Kingdom. The more public expression of these things to others will then come naturally without needing to be forced.

145:19 This isn’t a blank cheque promise to give us whatever we pray for; the “desire” of God’s people is paralleled here with salvation. “I want to live forever in God’s Kingdom more than anything else in the world” should be our credo; and if this is really the case in our hearts, we shall receive it (2 Tim. 4:8).

146:4 This clearly teaches that death is unconsciousness; we have no ‘immortal soul’ which consciously exists after death. The allusion is to how God made man from the dust and put into him the breath or spirit of life (Gen. 2:7). When we die, this spirit or life force returns to God, and we return to dust. The practical implication of correctly understanding human mortality is that we won’t trust in people, but rather in God; for we will realize their weakness and ultimate inability to save.

147:2 The Jews returned from Babylon to the land of their own volition; but it was Yahweh who gathered them back, as if He called them almost of His volition rather than theirs. They rebuilt Jerusalem; but actually, Yahweh did, through His confirmation of all the freewill effort of men like Ezra and Nehemiah. In our exodus from this world and journey to the Kingdom, God is willing and able to confirm every freewill effort we make in every aspect of our lives. The returning exiles had to strengthen the bars of Jerusalem’s gates as is emphasized throughout Neh. 3; but God worked through them (:13).

148:2 *All* the Angels are obedient to God; there are no sinful Angels in Heaven; see on 103:20,21.

148:6 God will never destroy the earth and heavens; it is His declared purpose to establish His eternal Kingdom on earth at Christ’s return (Dan. 2:44). Any references to the destruction of ‘heavens and earth’ are using this term in a symbolic sense to describe a system of things on earth (Is. 1:2).

148:14 *Saints* refers to all God’s people, not just a few very righteous people.

149:2 *Be joyful in their King*- This Psalm would’ve been written and used when Israel had a human king. But the Psalmist, perhaps king David, wanted them to understand that whatever system of human leadership there is amongst God’s people, He is their ultimate King and His Kingship was to be personally felt by every one of His people, so that they might eternally be His Kingdom, the entity of persons over which He extends rulership and sovereign authority.

150:3-5 The idea is that everything using all methods should praise God. We should never therefore limit the way others praise God, nor be critical of it because it’s not our method.