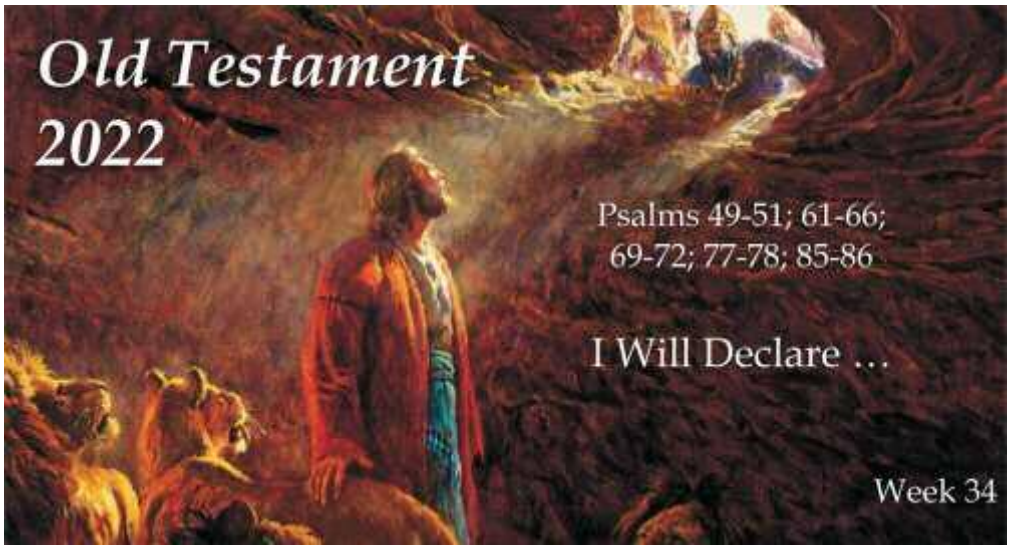

Week 34 is scheduled for study August 15-21, 2022. This week is all about forgiveness and testimony. Our redemption through Christ depends upon both if we want God's mercy.

Note: More than 400 years before Moses showed up, Joseph of Egypt was recording the prophecies he received. A very small part of these prophecies of the future of Israel is recorded in the Book of Mormon. I tell you this only because I have been so taken aback by the references to the Book of Mormon in the Old Testament. Anytime you see a reference of the word of God whispering or speaking out of the ground or out of the dust, it is referring to the Book of Mormon. I know of no other book of scripture that took more than two thousand years to write, only to sit in the ground for more than a thousand years before being delivered to a prophet as part of the restoration of the gospel for those who live in the latter days.

At first I was incredulous that there could be references to the Book of Mormon in Psalms. It was only after much reflection that I remembered that the psalmists had scriptures we don't have today. They had the writings of Joseph of Egypt for one, and he prophesied of the Lord's dealings with his descendants and about the future of Israel as a whole. King David would have known all about these prophesies, knowledge we don't have, except for tiny glimpses or references found in the Book of Mormon. This reflection has helped me feel more comfortable about how consistent God is about revealing His plans for His children to every generation who will accept the knowledge He wants us all to know. It has never mattered which generation is alive at the moment, if they will accept His word, He will give it to them. The future of

Israel, the ministry of Jesus, the portion of Joseph's family who would be led away from Jerusalem, all of these things were revealed to the ancients. So don't be surprised at some of the tidbits we see that could otherwise be known only through modern-day revelation.

Day 1

This outline identifies some of the doctrinal topics addressed in these psalms. As you study, certain words, images, or ideas may stand out to you. What do you feel the Lord is trying to teach you?

Psalms 49; 62:5-12 - Redemption comes only through Jesus Christ.

I have become accustomed to reading figurative writing and seeing the images they try to convey, so reading Psalms hasn't been all that difficult. But that is only partly true. Take today's reading as an example. I have had to read it at least three times, focusing intently, before the real picture of what is being said formed in my head. Hopefully it was easier for you than for me.

I don't know why I continue to assume that people were different back in King David's day than they are in our own. Being more of an agricultural society, with intimate knowledge of farming and the raising of animals, surely they weren't lured into the traps of sophistication and snobbery that our culture suffers from. Most of us have very little connection to the earth. Much of our modern society is based on life styles that are so remote from living off the land that we have people openly remarking that the slaughtering of beef is abominable and unnecessary when people can just go buy their beef at the corner grocer. These people really have no understanding of even the most basic facts of life.

In Psalm 49 the Lord speaks to all the earth, both those born into high society as well as those of low or humble birth (verses 1-2). The way they look at life is their folly (verse 13) for they fool themselves into believing that because of their wealth and riches they are different from those of lower society (verse 6), and what is worse, their posterity believes them (verse 13)! This short sighted view of life doesn't change the reality of life and death, even though they act like trusting in their wealth will make some kind of

difference. When they die they will be no better than a sheep that is found dead in a field, they will be laid in the ground to rot (verse 14).

Though the rich boast in their wealth, their wealth will not prevent them from dying just like the animals in the field. Can a wealthy man ransom his life from death and live forever? Can a wealthy man take all the glory he attains in this life with him into the grave? Verses 7, 9 tell us that the rich can give nothing that will cause God to save them from losing everything they have accumulated in life upon their death. Verses 10-12 tell us that both the wealthy and the low or brutish born will die, leaving all their wealth to someone else to possess. They will be laid in the grave like any animal that dies, to be the food of worms. Their beauty will not last, nor their titles or glory. Be not afraid of the wealthy, for when the wealthy man dies he carries none of his wealth with him, and his worldly glory will not go into the grave with him. He literally leaves it all behind and goes into the grave alone (verse 17). The psalmist says that a man who has wealth and doesn't understand that his wealth can't do him any good once he is dead is, in the end, no better than a dead animal (verse 20).

But, says the psalmist, God will redeem my soul from the grave (verse 15). I may not be rich in this life, but by worshiping my God I have the assurance that He will redeem my soul from rotting in the earth and being dead forever, for God gives me hope of life after death. This psalm is all about viewing life as an eternal venture, not something that is begun and finished inside of 80 years or so.

Psalm 62 completes today's train of thinking. What good is a fence that leans? It eventually falls over and is good for nothing. What good is a wall that is not straight, but bows in the middle. Eventually a wall that bows collapses under its own weight. Those who trust in their wealth to make a difference in the eternities are like a bowed wall or a leaning fence. Our only sure defense and protection, our only real source of power is what we receive from God, for He has all power. Okay, so your wealth multiplies. Fine, but don't put your trust or your heart on it. Trust in God, for God is our refuge and our strength. Once we are dead it is only from God that we have any hope of obtaining any mercy, for He "renders to every man according to his work" (verse 12).

It is true that the words Jesus or Christ are not mentioned once in either of these psalms. But who is the God who will judge us? Jesus Christ. Who is the God who

"renders to every man according to his work" if not Jesus? And it is in Jesus that we have our hope of a glorious day of resurrection from the grave. Jesus is our only hope for salvation from eternal death and separation from God, our Father. All of our hopes lie with our Savior. The things of this world that the people of this world put so much stock and store in will do nothing for us once we all inevitably die. Truly, our only hope lies in Christ. Without him we have only looking forward to moldering in the grave and darkness for eternity.

Day 2

This outline identifies some of the doctrinal topics addressed in these psalms. As you study, certain words, images, or ideas may stand out to you. What do you feel the Lord is trying to teach you?

Psalms 51; 85-86 - Because of the Savior's mercy, I can be forgiven of my sins.

We are told that there is only one sin for which there is no forgiveness, and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost. But premeditated murder is serious enough that though it can be forgiven, it is so serious that King David has been denied his place in the celestial worlds because of it. His glory has been given to another (Doctrine and Covenants 132:39). And remember that his murder was in tandem with the sin of adultery. We don't know if the denial of his glory was only because of the sin of murder or if it was because of the combination of two such serious sins.

What I find so hopeful in reading Psalm 51 is that David, though suffering greatly because of what he did, his words are still filled with hope that God will find it in His heart to forgive him for his sins. This song is full of that hope, that expectation, that his sins will be forgiven and that God can still work with David to create within him a clean heart. All too often when we commit sin it is difficult for us to believe that we can ever again have that purity of heart we once had before we started to make poor choices. David had faith that God could and would help him back to being like he was when God declared that David was a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). On our own we cannot change our dispositions, but with the Savior's atoning sacrifice we can be made pure again (and we all were in the beginning).

Forgiveness

Many of us have a basic difficulty with sin and forgiveness. We too often assume that when someone hurts us we have the right to judgment and retribution or vengeance. David understood that all sin is committed against God, and God only. In Psalm 51:4 David acknowledges that you can only sin against God, no one else.

> 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

The reason we can only sin against God is because God is the only one who can set the standard for behavior. He made the laws by which we will be judged, not us. So when we break those laws, though we may injure others in the process, the violation that brings upon us a judgment is cause by us breaking God's laws. This is why we are told that we must always forgive every hurt from another person, for any reason. God is the only one who has the right to choose whom He will forgive, for it is always His law that is being violated, not ours.

David killed an innocent man, and had sex with his wife. Think of all the people he hurt by those actions. Uriah wasn't the only one to die when David gave the kill order. The captain he order to do it killed an entire company of men in order to kill Uriah as ordered. All of those people were the sons, brothers, and probably fathers of other family members. All of those people were robbed of a relative that fateful day. And what about the shame David brought upon Uriah's wife by taking her when she still belonged to another?

It is the nature of sin to compound itself, just as it is the nature of goodness to spread to others. No single act is ever as simple as it seems at the time. That is not the nature of human interaction. Some effects from our behavior may not surface for years down the road, whether for good or ill. The principle we need to keep in mind that committing good is just like committing evil. Sooner or later the effects of that action will be demonstrated, and only God knows how far it will spread and how much of an effect it will have on others, and for how long. Initially we have only the simple choice as to which direction we will take the next step, to do good or to do evil. We can't always foresee the long term effects of those simple choices.

David forgiven

Psalm 86 appears to be have been written by David after he was forgiven by the Lord. In the first few verses he acknowledges both his having been forgiven of his sins, as well as his continued need for the mercies of the Lord.

> 1 Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy.
>
> 2 Preserve my [life]; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
>
> 3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.
>
> 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
>
> 5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Note that David calls himself "holy." Only someone who is actively repenting of sin can call themself holy. To be holy is to do good before God. This is why the Lord refers to His covenant people as a holy people. It is the goodness demonstrated by those living the commandments that qualifies them for holiness. Note that they are holy, not perfect. You don't have to be perfect to be holy.

For the vast majority of us there is no sin for which Christ will not forgive us if we humble ourselves before him and submit to his love and chastening. We cannot descend further than Christ's light and love can reach down to lift us up. The only person who can prevent us from being forgiven for the sins we commit is our self.

Day 3

This outline identifies some of the doctrinal topics addressed in these psalms. As you study, certain words, images, or ideas may stand out to you. What do you feel the Lord is trying to teach you?

Psalms 51:13-15; 66:16-17; 71:15-24 - My testimony of Jesus Christ can help others come unto Him.

How did you gain your testimony? It doesn't matter what that testimony is about. Did you gain any testimony without ever having heard of it before? For most people, the introduction to God's laws and doings among the children of men begins with someone telling about their experience with those laws and the goodness they have witnessed for

themself. Rarely is a testimony received in a vacuum of information. Almost always someone has planted the seed of faith by testifying of their own experience first. We receive our own testimony once we choose to exercise our own faith in what we have been told by others.

Where would we be if no one else opened their mouth to declare their experiences with God and His gospel? We would be in a spiritual vacuum that would prevent us from finding the truth. This is why it is so important that we be willing to speak up and speak out about what we have learned for ourselves about spiritual things. The size of the testimony, or the sophistication of the testimony is irrelevant. The Holy Ghost can work with anything, as long as there is something. He can simplify the most complex and magnify the most simple of witnesses.

When we are good we are Terrestrial people. When we promote good and try to help others be good as well, that is when we are being more celestial in our behavior. Being good is not good enough. God wants us to spread goodness in any way we can. President Gordon B. Hinckley said this in a devotional.

> "You are good. But it is not enough just to be good. You must be good for something. You must contribute good to the world. The world must be a better place for your presence. And the good that is in you must be spread to others. ...
>
> "In this world so filled with problems, so constantly threatened by dark and evil challenges, you can and must rise above mediocrity, above indifference. You can become involved and speak with a strong voice for that which is right" (Brigham Young University devotional, Marriott Center, 17 Sept. 1996).

Never under estimate the power of your witness or testimony of anything that is good. When we promote good in any way, we open doors for people's salvation to be found.

Day 4

This outline identifies some of the doctrinal topics addressed in these psalms. As you study, certain words, images, or ideas may stand out to you. What do you feel the Lord is trying to teach you?

Psalms 63; 69; 77-78 - The Lord will help me in my time of urgent need.

This lesson is a great example of why it is so important to study the scriptures. The last two psalms especially focus on the past blessings Israel received from the Lord. Why do you think Israel spent so much time rehearsing all the miracles God wrought in their behalf? What purpose can reliving the past serve to those who are currently feeling abandoned by the Lord? How would you answer such a question?

Let's say you have an old friend. The two of you have been through many trials together. You have secured many victories and have many pleasant memories of your time spent together. The faithfulness of your friend has been proven over and over again, and you have always felt secure and trusting of your friend's faithfulness. But now, circumstances are different. You are hearing things that cause you to question your friend's integrity. You mind and heart are filled with doubt as all the evidence of betrayal mount up around you. What do you do?

If you follow the example of the Psalmists, you should take some time and remember all the times your friend proved to be faithful and loyal in the past. Rehearsing the past successes of your friendship can help you gain the faith you need to continue putting faith in your friendship, even though you aren't seeing anything currently to prove your friend's loyalty. Rehearsing God's past performance to help and bless His people is how we muster the faith to continue on believing when times get hard, and we are filled with doubt. Dieter F. Uchtdorf said in General Conference one time, "doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith." That is easier said than done, if you have forgotten all that God has blessed you with in the past. This is why it is so important that we learn to make a regular habit of counting our blessings. We never know when we will have to rely on past blessings to get us through current or future trials.

FHE/Personal Study

Psalms 71:17; 78:5-7 - Make it known to your children

> 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:
>
> 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:

> 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

It never occurred to me until I spent some time looking at these verses that part of our covenant with God in the new and everlasting covenant is that we are responsible for passing on the knowledge of God to our children. Why? So they know in whom to place their hopes. The purpose is to help them gain a desire to be faithful and obedient while they are still young so they won't rebel against God when they become adults.

Modern revelation rewords the commandment to teach our children this way in Doctrine and Covenants 68:25-28.

> 25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.
>
> 26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.
>
> 27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.
>
> 28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

These two sets of verses are basically saying the same things. Teaching children of the expectations of the Lord were the same in ancient Israel as they are today. In both instances the purpose is to give the children a hope in Christ so they don't lose their way back home.

But if you are single, does that free you from the requirements of the covenant? Do you think the Lord is only concerned with little children? What about those who are newly converted, those who need strengthening in the gospel? How often have we been told we need to take those new to the gospel message under our wings and teach them the pleasing word of God, strengthen their testimonies, and show them how to live Christ's gospel? The Lord is just as concerned for those new to the message of salvation as He is for the little children who are still innocent of the ways of the world. This concept that all of us are going to be held responsible for strengthening each other's testimony is not spelled out in this lesson, but it seems to me to be a logical path to pursue.

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OT34-2022 – I Will Declare …

Week 34