
PSALMS

Lesson 21, Old Testament, Adult Religion Class, Tuesday, 7 February 2012

Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

The ancient Jews divided their scriptures into three parts: The Law (*torah*), the Prophets (*nevi'im*), and the Writings (*ketuvim*). Today, many Jews call their scriptures *Tanakh*, taking the first letter from these three sections. In the last section, the *ketuvim*, the Psalms are the most important writings.

“Psalm” comes from a Greek word, *psalmon*, meaning ‘to pluck’ as in play an instrument. The Hebrew word for the Psalms is *sepher tehillim*, meaning ‘book of praises’ or ‘book of hymns.’

There are several types of psalms but most can be divided into two broad categories: psalms of praise and psalms of lament. Psalms of praise are often associated with the temple and temple worship while psalms of lament are a request to God for some kind of blessing or intervention.

In the beginning, the Psalms were probably written by many different people and collected in bits and pieces. Over time, Jews began to bring them together into one scroll. By about 200 A.D., the psalter was mostly organized as we have it today. As the Jews brought them together, they tried to organize them somewhat by topic and content. The result is that they created five groups—probably to match the five books of Moses:

1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150

At the end of each section is a doxology or ‘praise of God’ (see 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). The final section wraps up the whole book, so they made the last Psalm (150:1-6) be an entire doxology by itself.

Another structural items to note is that there are two kinds of Psalms—Jehovistic and Elohistic. This is determined by the dominant name used for God in the psalm. The Jehovah psalms are groups 1, 4 and 5 above (Psalms 1-41, 90-150). The Elohim psalms are the ones in the middle, groups 2-3 (Psalms 42-89). This is most obvious as you look at some of the psalms in these two sections that are basically the same. (see, for example, Psalms 14 = 53; 40:13-17 = 70; 57:7-11 and 60:5-12 = 108).

Some of the later psalms are clearly made from parts of earlier ones, such as 96 from 24, 47, and 48; 97 from 30 and 32; and 143 from 27, 28, 69, and 84.

Authorship of the psalms is uncertain. Though almost half are assigned to David, it is likely that he did not write all of them, though some certainly did come from him. A few other psalms are attributed to other people but a large number are anonymous.

HEBREW POETRY

Most Psalms are poetry, but not the kind of poetry we are used to, with either rhyming words or a more abstract flow of thought. Ancient Hebrews valued poetry that used repetition or parallelism, as it is called.

Here is an example: Psalm 5:1-7. Note the parallelism in each verse.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD,
consider my meditation.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry,
my King,
and my God:
for unto thee will I pray.

3 My voice shalt thou hear
in the morning, O LORD;
in the morning
will I direct my prayer unto thee,
and will look up.

4 For thou art not a God that hath
pleasure in wickedness:
neither shall evil
dwell with thee.

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:
thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:
the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful
man.

7 But as for me,
I will come into thy house
in the multitude of thy mercy:
and in thy fear will I worship
toward thy holy temple.

There are many different kinds of parallelism. Sometimes the two phrases mean the same thing, just stated different ways, as in Psalm 5 above. At other times, the phrases are opposites, as in Psalm 9:16.

The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth:
the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

After you become familiar with it, you begin to see parallelism all through the Psalms—and other books, too. Look at the parallelism in Psalm 12:1-7.

1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth;
for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:

with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

4 Who have said,
With our tongue will we prevail;
our lips are our own:
who is lord over us?

5 For the oppression of the poor,
for the sighing of the needy,

now will I arise, saith the LORD;
I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Now look at another book outside of Psalms that is also poetic. Look for the parallel phrases, sometimes short, sometimes long in **Isaiah 53:1-9**.

In many cases, one of the parallel phrases might help you understand its pair. See how knowing there is poetry at work helps clarify Isaiah 2:3. It starts, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...” If you stopped there, you might not be certain what the “mountain of the Lord” means. But read the parallel phrase and it is explained: “...to the house of the God of Jacob.” The temple or house of God is compared to a mountain, a place close to God.

One last form of parallelism is the most complex one. It is called chiasmus, a name that comes from the shape of the Greek letter *chi* which looks like an X. A chiasmus stretches out a parallelism over several phrases, and then matches them up in a decreasing/increasing style. Look at a simple example, Psalm 124:7.

Our soul is escaped as a bird
out of the snare of the fowlers:
the snare is broken,
And we are escaped.

The scriptures are full of simple and complex examples of chiasmus, such as Psalm 3:7-8.

save me, O my God:
for thou hast smitten
all mine enemies
upon the cheek bone;
the teeth
of the ungodly.
thou hast broken
Salvation belongeth unto the LORD

Humble
Children
Atoning blood
Natural man
God
Has been
Will be
Holy Spirit
Natural man
Atonement of Christ
Child
Humble

On a side note, it is amazing to note that though no one ‘discovered’ chiasmus until long after Joseph Smith was dead, the Book of Mormon is full of chiastic poetry.

In fact, in the Book of Mormon, as in the Bible, whole sections of books or even books are structured chiastically, such as 1 Nephi, King Benjamin’s speech, or Alma 36.

Mosiah 3:18-19 (key phrases, not the entire text):

HEBREW PHRASES / DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Some Hebrew words were not translated by the King James translators. Mostly this is because they were uncertain of the meanings, but sometimes because they were respectful of the Hebrew structure. Here are some examples (see the Bible Dictionary under “Psalms” for more details).

End of Psalm 3:8 – The most common Hebrew term is *Selah*, which was probably a signal for the singers to take a break and let the musicians play alone for a bit. *Selah* is found 71 times in Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk.

Others include:

- Psalm 4 heading (*Neginoth*, music/song)
- Psalm 5 heading (*Nehiloth*, uncertain but perhaps a melody)
- Psalm 6 heading (*Sheminith*, perhaps an instrument)
- Psalm 7 heading (*Shiggaion*, uncertain)
- Psalm 8 heading (*Gittith*, a wine press?)
- Psalm 9 heading (*Muthlabben*, uncertain)
- Psalm 9:16 last words (*Higgaion*, meditation or musing).

Another psalm with Hebrew words happens to be the longest psalm—119. It is broken into twenty-two sections—the letters of the Hebrew alphabet—each with eight verses. Each verse starts with a word that begins with the Hebrew letter in the title of that section—an acrostic.

Other acrostics are 25 and 34 (each line starting with successive letters) and 37, 111, and 112.

The final acrostic psalm is 145. In this case, though, each verse begins with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in ascending order. But there are only twenty-one verses and twenty-two letters. Thus scholars have known for centuries that one verse had to be missing, because none of them started with the letter *nun*. If we had this verse, it would be between verses 13 and 14 today. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, there were many copies of the Psalms, and one of them included Ps 145—with the missing verse. Here it is:

Blessed be the Lord and blessed be his name forever and ever. God is faithful in his words, and gracious in his deeds. Blessed be the Lord and blessed be his name forever and ever.

The Dead Sea Scrolls gave us something else besides this verse—15 new psalms. We have 150 in our collection, but they had 165, most of which we had never seen before the scrolls were discovered.

PSALMS AS MUSIC

The Psalms were the hymns of the Old Testament but the musical messages of the Psalms were also prominent in the New Testament. For example, music was part of the Passover, which made it part of the Last Supper. In Matthew 26:30, the hymn they surely sang was the *Hallel*, or the group of psalms we now call Psalms 113-118. Imagine Jesus singing these words just before he goes out to the garden of Gethsemane and what he knows will be his death (see especially Psalm 118:6, 17, 22-26).

Like we have Christmas music or other songs for special occasions, certain Psalms were tied to the great Jewish feasts and holidays:

Psalm	Feast	Comment
<i>Hallel</i> , 113-118	Passover, Feast of the Tabernacles, and Feast of Purim	Hallel-u-jah psalms
81	Rosh Hashanah (New Year)	
Songs of Ascent, 120-134	All	Sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem
108; 115:9-18; 116:12-19; 118; 135; 136	Congregational	Used in regular temple worship, designed for singers and the congregation who joined in on certain parts
1 -24 2 - 48 3 - 82 4 - 94 5 - 81 6 - 93 7 - 92		Sang with the morning and evening sacrifices, with a different song for each day of the seven days of the week

The Psalms have also had a greater impact on our own music than any other book of scripture. Look at the scriptural index in the back of the hymnbook to see that. Another famous example is Handel's *Messiah* which quotes from Psalms extensively.

THE JST AND THE PSALMS

It is surely not coincidental that the books of the Old Testament that received the most attention by Joseph Smith—Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah—are among the most quoted books in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. That the Prophet would give careful attention to them attests to their lasting theological value.

In the case of the Psalms, many of the changes that Joseph Smith made are autobiographical in appearance. In other words, when the Prophet read the psalmists' words through inspiration, he also saw in them his own experiences. It is easy to hear in these changes the pleas and prayers of the young Prophet learning the

truths of God through revelation, guiding the Church through its earliest years, and seeking for righteousness to prevail over evil, for Zion to be established, and for the Lord to intervene in behalf of his people.

Deleting or changing italicized words is a common pattern in the JST, but especially in the psalms. The Prophet also made many grammatical changes that do not alter meaning but do make the psalter easier to read.

As mentioned above, Hebrew tradition divides the Psalms into five groups (1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150), paralleling the five books of Moses in the *Torah*. It is also noted that while the wording is not identical in these parallel psalms, the most noticeable difference is that some tend to use "LORD" (=YHWH or Jehovah) and others GOD (=Elohim), though a mix of those divine names are found in most. A close examination shows that in Psalms 1-41, LORD/Jehovah is used 272 times, while GOD/Elohim is only found 15 times. But in Psalms 42-72 it is reversed, with Elohim appearing 164 times to only 30 times for Jehovah. The JST enhances this difference in 1-41, inserting five additional occurrences of "Lord" but adding only two occurrences of "God."

Most of the JST changes are concentrated in the earlier psalms, which scholars generally see as the core and probably oldest psalms. Many JST changes make these psalms more prophetic or eschatological, focused on the future rather than the present day, on God's ultimate judgment rather than justice in this world.

As an example, here is some detailed commentary on two of the most personal psalms for Joseph Smith, 11 and 14.

(11:1) In ~~the~~ **that day thou shalt come, O LORD, and I will put my trust in thee. Thou shalt say unto thy people, for my ear hath heard thy voice; how thou shalt say ye to my unto every soul, Flee as a bird to your unto my mountain?, and the righteous shall flee like a bird that is let go from the snare of the fowler.**

(11:2) For, ~~he,~~ the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart **to destroy their foundation.**

(11:3) ~~If~~ **But the foundations be of the wicked shall be destroyed, and what can the righteous they do?**

(11:4) For the LORD, ~~when he shall come is in~~ **into his holy temple, the LORD's sitting upon God's throne is in heaven: his eyes shall pierce the wicked; behold, his eyelids shall try, the children of men, and he shall redeem the righteous, and they shall be tried.**

(11:5) The LORD ~~trieth~~ **loveth** the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

In that day thou shalt come. The overall theme is to put the psalmist's plea in an eschatological perspective, focused on the future coming of the Lord, and how the Lord will judge the wicked and care for his people. See also [Psalm 12:1](#).

for my ear hath heard thy voice. This JST addition is an example of the personal, even autobiographical, feelings these changes in the Psalms must have invoked in the young Joseph Smith.

Flee unto my mountain...he shall come into his holy temple. Shortly before the Prophet was translating Psalms, he received D&C 88 (dated December 27, 1832), which includes:

"...a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean" (D&C 88:74).

Then, after recounting great events of the last days leading up to the second coming, the revelation continues:

Therefore, verily I say unto you, my friends, call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you....Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a

house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God (D&C 88:117, 119).

This is the first revelation in the Doctrine & Covenants that directs the Saints to build a temple in this dispensation. Though Psalm 11 came just after D&C 88, as with many sections in the Doctrine & Covenants, the correlation with JST topics and changes is worth noting.

like a bird that is let go from the snare of the fowler. There are three other references to the *snare of the fowler* in the scriptures, two of which are in other psalms.¹ This addition thus adds a fourth reference using this phrase, also in a psalm. In this psalm and in the other references, the fowler is a metaphor for Satan and his evil powers and influences. The uniqueness of this verse is that the righteous are fleeing the snare with great haste in order to go to God's mountain, or temple.

destroy their foundation...the foundations of the wicked shall be destroyed. *Foundation* is primarily used in two ways in the scriptures, first referencing the foundation of a home, building, or temple (e.g., 1 Kings 5:17; Ezra 3:10), and second referring to the beginning of something, the most common being the foundation of the world (e.g., 2 Samuel 22:8; Job 38:4), though there are several Hebrew words behind those translations. The one used in verse 3 is *šāt*, which in this form is found otherwise only in Isaiah 19:10 (and where it is translated *purposes* in the KJV).² However, the word is related to others that are translated as the name *Seth* (with the meaning of *given* or *appointed*, as in Genesis 4:25-26); *buttocks*, referring to the *foundation* of a person when seated (2 Samuel 10:4; Isaiah 20:4); and *set*, especially related to setting the heart, which is the foundation of a person's inner being (e.g., Job 7:17; Psalm 62:10; Jeremiah 31:21).³ This latter meaning ties to the JST change in verse 2, that the wicked shoot their arrows at the "upright in heart to destroy their foundation." But the tables are turned in verse 3, and it is the helpless wicked whose foundations/purposes/hearts are instead destroyed by the Lord when he comes to dwell in his holy temple.

his eyes shall pierce the wicked. The phrase *eyes shall pierce the wicked*, added here in the JST, is found nowhere else in the King James Bible.⁴ However, an earlier translation by Joseph Smith (Moses 7:36), seems to serve as the inspiration for this addition: "Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and *mine eye can pierce them* also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great *wickedness* as among thy brethren" (italics added). Later (March 20, 1839), as Joseph Smith was writing his inspired letter from Liberty Jail, he also used a similar phrase:

O Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven, earth, and seas, and of all things that in them are, and who controlllest and subjectest the devil, and the dark and benighted dominion of Sheol—stretch forth thy hand; let thine *eye pierce*; let thy pavilion be taken up; let thy hiding place no longer be covered; let thine ear be inclined; let thine heart be softened, and thy bowels moved with compassion toward us.

Let thine anger be kindled against our *enemies*; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs (D&C 121:4-5; italics added).

he shall redeem the righteous. See also Psalm 24:8-9. Like the phrase above, this one is unique to this JST verse. Redemption is a common theme throughout the scriptures, including the children of Israel being redeemed out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 7:8; Micah 6:4); being redeemed/delivered from the hands of enemies (Job 6:23; Psalm 69:18; 106:10; 136:24); and most significantly, being redeemed from sin and death (Isaiah 44:22; Hosea 13:14). It is Jesus Christ who redeems us (Galatians 3:13). It is He who justifies and purifies sinners (Titus 2:14), redeeming us to God (Revelation 5:9). Abinadi taught this

¹ Psalm 91:3; 124:7; Hosea 9:8. There is also a verse that mentions a fowler without a snare in Proverbs 6:5.

² *BDB*, 1011.

³ *TWOT*, 921.

⁴ Psalm 91:8 reads, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."

doctrine marvelously, showing that those striving to be obedient—the righteous—receive the redeeming power, while the wicked are not redeemed:

Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions....

And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not (Mosiah 15:11-12; 16:2).

they shall be tried. To be *tried* is not a legal proceeding, but to be tested (in this verse and typically, the Hebrew word is *bāḥan*, meaning to examine, try, prove, or test⁵). It is a purifying and strengthening process that makes the righteous stronger, as described by the prophet Zechariah: “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zechariah 13:9). Paul follows the same metaphor, declaring that “the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13; see also 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12) because it is God who tries our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4) and gives the crown of life to those who pass the test (James 1:12). Such tests come step by step, line upon line (D&C 98:12), until we are tested like Abraham of old (D&C 101:4). Our trials come to prepare us for God’s greatest blessings:

My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom (D&C 136:31).

The Lord loveth the righteous. This change heightens the contrast of the verse, with the Lord loving, not just testing, those who keep his commandments and hating those who sin. That the Lord still tries (or tests) the righteous is clear from the previous verse, but he does it in order to redeem them.

(14:1) The fool hath said in his heart, **There is no man that hath seen God, because he sheweth himself not unto us, therefore, there is no God. Behold,** they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, ~~there is and none that~~ **of them** doeth good.

(14:2) For the LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, **and by his voice said unto his servant, seek ye among the children of men,** to see if there ~~were~~ **are** any that ~~did do~~ understand, ~~and seek~~ God. **And he opened his mouth unto the Lord, and said, Behold, all these who say they are thine.**

(14:3) The Lord answered and said, They are all gone aside, they are ~~all~~ together become filthy: ~~there is thou~~ **canst behold** none of these that ~~doeth~~ **are doing** good, no, not one.

(14:4) All they have for their teachers ~~all the~~ **are** workers of iniquity, **and there is no knowledge in them?** They are they who eat up my people; ~~as~~ they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

There are perhaps no changes to the Psalms more personal than these for Joseph Smith. The First Vision, Joseph’s commission as a prophet, the opposition he faced, and his desire to establish Zion are all elements of this revised psalm. There is also a subtle and appropriate shift in theology. In the KJV version, the Lord is the

⁵ TWOT, 100.

one seeking to know what is going on, while in the Prophet's revised psalm, it is the Lord teaching his servant what is going on.⁶

Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are parallel compositions. Both are changed by the Prophet, but as the two psalms are slightly different, so are the changes he made. Psalm 53 has less of an autobiographical feel, retaining more of the original KJV flavor. For convenience, a side-by-side comparison is offered below with Psalm 53.

There is no man that hath seen God. Reflecting other changes he had previously made in the New Testament (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12; 1 Timothy 6:15-16) and in the Old Testament (Exodus 33:20, 23) teaching that man does indeed see God under certain conditions, the Prophet expanded on the psalm's message: not only does the fool say there is no God, but his reason for saying this is that he believes no one has seen God. Of course, Joseph claimed to have seen God and was persecuted by such 'fools' for saying so (e.g., Joseph Smith—History 1:21-22). Interestingly, Joseph Smith quoted this verse from the KJV in his 1832 account of the First Vision—written by him⁷ about the same time as the JST work on Psalms—as one of several that he was pondering prior to entering the sacred grove for guidance. The Lord also quoted this psalm (verses 1 and 3) back to Joseph in His response, telling him that “none doeth good no not one.”⁸

by his voice said unto his servant. Joseph's accounts of the First Vision don't give all the details of the conversation between Joseph Smith and the Lord. They do conclude that he learned that he should join none of the existing religions. In verses 2-4 in this psalm, we get a possible sense of more of that conversation, at least a key teaching moment for the young Joseph. First, the Lord asks his servant to consider if anyone around him understands God. The servant's reply is that they all claim to speak for God. It's a response of confusion, just as Joseph felt. Then the Lord states his position relative to them all: they are living in apostasy, working iniquity and lacking the knowledge of the truth.

(14:5) ~~There were~~ For they are in great fear: for God ~~is~~ dwells in the generation of the righteous.

(14:6) He is the counsel of the poor, because they are ashamed of the wicked, and flee unto the Lord for their refuge. ~~Ye have shamed~~ They are ashamed of the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

(14:7) Oh that Zion were established out of heaven, the salvation of Israel; ~~were come out of~~ O Lord, when wilt thou establish Zion!? When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, ~~and~~ Israel shall be glad.

For they are in great fear. Though the wicked mentioned in verse 4 appear to be in charge, busily oppressing the poor, the Lord reveals that in reality they live in fear, for they know that God's presence is only a blessing to the righteous.

the counsel of the poor. Like the poor Zoramites to which Alma and Amulek preached (Alma 32), the poor spoken of in this verse look to the Lord for their guidance, and flee to him for refuge from the persecutions of the wicked. They are ashamed of the wicked, in the same sense that the wicked are ashamed of the Lord (who, we learn, is the counsel of the poor).

that Zion were established. This plea of the Prophet and the young Church arises from his learning about Zion while translating the Enoch stories (Genesis 5:21-24; Moses 6:25-7:69) and subsequent revelations as recorded in the Doctrine & Covenants (e.g., 38:4; 45:67-71; 57:2). The number of mentions in the JST, the Doctrine & Covenants, and in Joseph Smith's writings about Zion during this time⁹ shows how foundational

⁶ R. Scott Burton, “The Hymnal of Ancient Israel,” in Jackson, *Studies in Scriptures* 4, 410.

⁷ Marsh, *Eyewitness History*, vol. 1, 84. Though most of the record is in the hand of his scribe, Frederick G. Williams, the account of the First Vision is written in Joseph's hand.

⁸ Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 156-157.

⁹ See, for example, Jesse, *Personal Writings*, 285, 292-293, 297-298.

this concept was to him and the early Church, “one of the main objects of Joseph Smith’s ministry.”¹⁰ See also [Psalm 46:5](#).

MESSIANIC PSALMS

Today we recognize that many psalms are talking about the Savior. There are some passages that are not obviously about him, which is why Jews still don’t see Jesus Christ in the psalms. But once you see it, references to his past and future missions are everywhere. In fact, the Psalms were such an important witness of Jesus and his mission that Jesus and the early apostles quoted from the Psalms more than any other book (see Bible Dictionary, “Quotations”).

Some examples include:

- A speech by Paul in Acts 13:33-35, that quotes from 2:7; 16:10
- Matthew 7:23, quoting Psalm 6:8
- Matthew 27:34 quoting Psalm 69:21 and Matthew 27:35 quoting Psalm 22:18, all of which relate to Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion
- Matthew 21:16 quoting Psalm 8:2, an example of Jesus quoting the Psalms more than any other book, and of the difference is the Hebrew vs Greek translation (LXX)

Jesus said several things on the cross, many of which were quotations from Psalms:

- Matthew 27:46 quoting Psalm 22:1 (Jesus is saying it in Aramaic)
- Luke 23:46 quoting Psalm 31:5

Jesus’ enemies quoted psalms against him:

- Matthew 27:43 quoting Psalm 22:8

Even Satan quoted Psalms when he was tempting Jesus:

- Matthew 4:6 quoting Psalm 91:11-12

THE BEAUTY OF THE PSALMS

Knowing the structure and background of the psalms helps us better appreciate and understand the huge effort that went into making and preparing them for us. But the true beauty of the psalms is in their messages. Here is a sampling.

Psalm 8:1-9 – In verse 5, not “angels” but “elohim”—God or the gods.

Psalm 24:1-10 – Thought to be the psalm David wrote when he made Jerusalem his capital and brought the ark there (representing the King of Glory coming in). Verses 7-10 were used in *The Messiah* but is also quite different in the JST.

Psalm 46:1-11 – This was Martin Luther’s favorite Psalm and the basis for his great song *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*.

¹⁰ Jackson, *Studies in Scripture 4*, 409.

Psalm 51:7-13, 17 – As we are forgiven of our sins and changed into a new person, we are prepared and desirous of sharing this message with others.

Psalm 8:1-9 – Man is a little lower than the gods.

Psalm 23:1-6 – A favorite of many with its poetry that comes through very well even in English.

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