

CHRIST IN THE PSALMS AND PROPHETS

November 6, 2022 | Anticipating Christ's Resurrection

SERIES PREVIEW

Last year, Oakwood small groups studied the life of Jesus. One of the things we learned was that Jesus's life was part of a larger story that began long before He was born and will continue until after He comes again. All of human history centers on the man we profess to be the savior of the world. It is not surprising that Christians following Christ's ascension continue to define our lives in terms of Jesus's story. What may be surprising to many is that the generations before Christ's birth looked forward to His coming. This series will examine eight Old Testament passages that anticipate the first coming of Christ. Each lesson will identify the main idea of the passage and give special consideration to how the passage points to the first coming of Christ. May this series prepare your heart to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ!

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Why is the resurrection so extraordinary?

Read Psalm 16.

Ask God to help you find refuge in Him through the resurrected Son.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

A careful examination of Psalm 16 in the context of the surrounding psalms reveals a way of reading it that anticipates the resurrection of Jesus.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

The resurrection was not an accident. It was part of God's plan from the beginning.

❏ MEDITATE

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption” (Psalm 16:10).

GETTING STARTED

+This section will look at how the New Testament authors anticipated the resurrection of Jesus. This will set the context for the remainder of the lesson.

- ❏ *Why would Jesus call His companions on the road to Emmaus foolish for not foreseeing the resurrection in the Old Testament (Luke 24:25)?*
- ❏ *Why would someone question Peter (Acts 2:31) and Paul’s (Acts 13:36–37) interpretation of Psalm 16:10?*

Jesus’s resurrection was the most significant event of His first coming. So much of Jesus’s life was remarkable and miraculous. His virgin birth, His baptism, ministry, miracles, death, and ascension were all significant, but the resurrection began a new stage in God’s redemption of the world. It was the first act in God’s new creation.

Given its centrality, it is not surprising that Christians have suggested the resurrection was predicted in the Old Testament. According to Acts, this claim was first made by the resurrected Lord Jesus Himself. Speaking with two of His followers traveling to the town of Emmaus, Christ proclaimed in reference to his death and resurrection, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25–26). Jesus said His resurrection was spoken of by the prophets, a reference to the Old Testament, but He did not point to a specific Old Testament passage.

On the day of Pentecost, not long after Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter also declared that the Old Testament spoke of Jesus’s resurrection. After quoting Psalm 16:8–11, he said, “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:29–31). Peter believed Psalm 16:8–11 spoke of Jesus’s resurrection, and he explicitly denied that this passage could have been about the author, King David.

Later, Paul also claimed that Psalm 16:10 speaks of Jesus’s resurrection in his address to the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13–52). After quoting Psalm 16:10, he said, “For David, after he had served the purpose of God

in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his father and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:36–37). So, Paul also applied Psalm 16:10 to Jesus’s resurrection and denied that David could have been speaking about himself in those verses.

These two figures, who were central to Christianity in the days and years immediately following Christ’s death and resurrection, pointed to Psalm 16:10 as evidence of the resurrection. The problem was that many readers of Psalm 16 never recognized its connection to the resurrection and still questioned whether the author was really anticipating the resurrection of the Messiah. What did Peter and Paul see in Psalm 16 that led them to believe it was speaking of the resurrection of the Jesus? This lesson will present a way of reading Psalm 16 that affirms their insight into the Old Testament’s testimony of Jesus.

Q: *Why would believers be hesitant to affirm that Psalm 16:10 is about Jesus’s resurrection even though Peter and Paul claimed it is?*

Q: *What do you do when you encounter a biblical passage you do not understand, whether it is a New Testament reference to the Old Testament or not?*

APPLICATION POINT – It is often challenging to understand how the New Testament authors understood the Old Testament, especially when they made claims about the Old Testament’s relationship to the coming of Jesus. Some critical interpreters believe they made up their observations and that modern readers should not believe them. Other interpreters, even among believing evangelicals, argue that the New Testament authors made up their observations but think that affirming their observations is part of what it means to live by faith in Christ. This lesson will likely be received in different ways by the members of your group or church, but it is important for Christians to try to understand what the Bible means, especially when it pertains to the Old Testament’s message concerning Jesus. We need to have confidence in the Bible for a healthy faith. This lesson will suggest a way of reading Psalm 16 that is consistent with the New Testament. Whether you accept everything in this lesson or not, it is important for you to wrestle with Scripture until you have confidence in what the Bible says.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+This lesson is about trying to understand how Peter and Paul read Psalm 16:10 as evidence of Jesus’s resurrection. It is important to remember, however, that Psalm 16 is about more than just the resurrection. As with all Scripture, Psalm 16 was written to instruct believers and increase their faith. The first section of this lesson will consider

the main points of Psalm 16. The final two sections will consider issues pertaining to reading it as evidence of the resurrection.

1. THE MESSAGE OF PSALM 16

2. FINDING THE MESSIAH IN PSALM 16

3. RESURRECTION OR NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE?

GOING DEEPER

+This section will follow the outline given above and draw applications from the discussions for believers.

1. THE MESSAGE OF PSALM 16

■ PSALM 16:1-7

🔍: *How does Psalm 16 guide us to find protection in God?*

🔍: *Why is experiencing God as a refuge dependent on submitting to Him as Lord?*

The main message of Psalm 16 is that God can be depended on as a refuge in times of great need or danger. The psalmist declared this in the opening verse. A refuge is typically some kind of shelter that offers protection from the elements and roaming predators. Applied metaphorically to God, it means that God offers protection from enemies and the routine dangers of life.

Finding refuge in God also means finding a goodness or a pleasantness in life that is only available to the godly. The psalmist declared he knew no good apart from God (Psalm 16:2). He described life with God with language similar to that used by Joshua when he divided the promised land among the Israelites (Joshua 13–19; Psalm 16:5–6). His allotment in life was good because God had made it so.

God as a refuge is only available to those who submit to His will. Those who, like the wicked in Psalm 12:4, challenge His lordship will only find sorrows (Psalm 16:4). By including these lines, the psalmist continues the great contrast between the righteous and the wicked that is so germane to the Psalms (Psalm 1).

Q: *How have you seen God's protection over the last year?*

Q: *In what areas do you struggle to submit to God's rule over your life? Why is it tempting to think you can provide for yourself better than He can?*

APPLICATION POINT – The Scriptures contain a consistent witness of God's provision in the lives of those who trust in Him, but trusting God remains hard for us to do. One reason trusting God is hard is that even when we are trusting Him, we do not remain passive. Rather, trusting God usually entails trusting Him to work through what we are doing to secure our provision. The problem is that the line between trusting God to work through us and failing to trust Him by relying only on ourselves is often blurry for us. We can start by trusting in God's provision but quickly begin to think and act as though we are providing for ourselves. One sign that we are no longer trusting God for provision is being unable to find rest. Jesus promised that following Him would secure our rest (Matthew 11:28). This does not mean complete freedom from toil and hard work. Instead, it means being able to stop and reflect upon the goodness of God regardless of our situation.

Q: *The psalmist obviously delighted in God's refuge. What else did he delight in?*

Q: *What is the relationship between fellowship and finding refuge in God?*

The psalmist found refuge in God, but it was not as though he ran away by himself to find solitude in being alone with God. In finding refuge in God, he found others doing the same, and the comradery between them was cause for delight as well (Psalm 16:3). When based on the foundation of God's refuge, community can build one's delight in God and others beyond compare.

Q: *How is your faith personal? How does it drive you to community?*

Q: *How can you promote in your church the delight David experienced in Psalm 16:3?*

APPLICATION POINT – God created us as communal creatures, and the community God intended is best exemplified in local church communities. Although trusting Christ as Savior is a personal commitment, the Bible gives abundant evidence of the importance God places on His people finding community with one another. The local church should be prized among believers, not neglected. If you are going through this lesson in a group, you know first-hand the delight David spoke of in Psalm 16:3, but there are others who are content to stay on the margins of the local church and fail to find the community they need. If that is you, or if it describes someone you know, make the commitment needed to find the delight David did.

2. FINDING THE MESSIAH IN PSALM 16

■ PSALM 15–24 (THIS SHOULD TAKE FEWER THAN 15 MINUTES)

🔍: *Why do we usually read the psalms individually, without much concern for their arrangement?*

🔍: *Who wrote Psalms 15–24?*

Unlike the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are typically read independent of one another without much attention to their arrangement or what precedes or follows a psalm. While most interpreters believe context is crucial for understanding narratives or epistles, few consider the context of any psalm to be of importance. Recent research questions this approach by showing an intentional design behind the arrangement of some psalms. One of the arrangements that has received the most attention is that of Psalms 15–24, which, of course, includes Psalm 16. Many scholars believe these psalms are placed in a chiasmic arrangement based on their themes. A chiasm (also called a chiasmus, chiasmic structure) is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order. The result is a “mirror” effect as the ideas are “reflected” back in a passage.

A. Psalm 15: The holy king

B. Psalm 16: Song of trust

C. Psalm 17: A prayer for help

D. Psalm 18: A royal psalm

E. Psalm 19: A creation/Torah psalm

D. Psalm 20–21: Royal psalms

C. Psalm 22: A prayer for help

B. Psalm 23: Song of trust

A. Psalm 24: The holy king

Psalms 15 and 24 both question who may dwell or ascend the holy hill of God (Psalm 15:1; 24:3). The answer in both is one who lives in righteousness (Psalm 15:2–5; 24:4). Who is this one seeking to dwell on God’s holy hill? In Psalm 24, it is the king. This king is identified with God. In Psalm 2:6, God set the messianic king on His holy hill, the very phrase used in Psalm 15:1. This and the correspondence with Psalm 24 suggest the individual who will dwell with God in Psalm 15:1 is the same king. Psalms 16 and 23 declare the speaker’s absolute trust in God. Both psalms include the phrase “my cup” (Psalm 16:5; 23:5), which appears in the Old Testament only in these two instances. Both psalms also declare the joy of dwelling with God (Psalm 16:11, Psalm 23:6).

In Psalms 17 and 22, the tone quickly changes from confident celebration to desperate need. The speaker was surrounded by those seeking to do him harm (Psalm 17:9, 11; 22:16). Lions were after him (Psalm 17:12; 22:13, 21). Despite the danger, the psalmist anticipated God’s deliverance (Psalm 17:15; 22:22). In Psalms 18 and 20–21, the king found protection in God (Psalm 18:2; 20:2). Furthermore, God gave him great victories (Psalm 18:50; Psalm 20:6, 9), even with the power of His right hand (Psalm 18:35; 20:6; 21:8). In Psalm 20:6, this king is referred to as God’s anointed, the same title given to the Son in Psalm 2:2. “Anointed” is the term from which we get the word “messiah” and the Greek word “Christ.” In Psalm 19, David intertwined God’s creation with His law. In Psalm 19:2, he declared of creation, “Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” This is reminiscent of Psalm 1:2 where the speaker meditates on the law of God day and night.

The arrangement of these psalms and the connections between them suggest a single speaker throughout. The king who ascends God’s holy hill (Psalm 15, 24) is the same victorious king of Psalms 18 and 20–21. And the same individual who must endure his enemies’ schemes (Psalm 22, 17) has complete trust in God’s preservation. Given the connections with Psalms 1 and 2, the theme of the way of the righteous versus the way of the wicked, and the identification of the king with the anointed Son, it is understandable that this king could be thought of as the Messiah. Thus, when this individual speaks in Psalms 15–24, we hear the voice of the Messiah. These are still David’s psalms, and it is David who was writing/speaking. But David’s voice is subsumed by the messianic king. This is why Peter and Paul could apply Psalm 16 to the Messiah.

Q: *How do you typically read the Psalms? What implications does this study have for your reading?*

Q: *Peter and Paul believed Jesus was at the center of the Old Testament. Why is this an important point?*

APPLICATION POINT – Peter and Paul, the two central figures in Christianity following the resurrection, believed Jesus was at the center of the Old Testament. This reveals what they thought to be central in life and can instruct us as well. Life is about Christ at the center, not us. The story that must be told is His. What is important in this world is the gospel of Jesus Christ, not our personal comforts and desires. Humanity has sinned, and Christ has provided for us a way of redemption. Follow Peter and Paul’s lead and make Jesus the center of the life you lead and the stories you tell.

3. RESURRECTION OR NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE?

■ PSALM 16:10

Q: *Can you explain the connection between the resurrection and the absence of corruption? How does the absence of corruption point to the resurrection?*

Q: *What notes, if any, does your Bible have pertaining to the word “corruption”?*

The previous section described how Peter and Paul could claim Psalm 16 was speaking of the Messiah. This section will consider how they found the resurrection in Psalm 16. The word the apostles appear to focus on is “corruption,” which means to depart from what is normal in a negative way. Applied to a dead body, corruption refers to decay, the body wasting away from its normal state. When the psalmist said God would not let His holy one see corruption, he meant the body would not decay because God would raise Him from the dead before decay began. This is how Peter and Paul were reading this verse. The problem with this interpretation is the Hebrew word underlying “corruption” may also mean “pit.” This is likely noted in many of your Bibles. The discrepancy over this word stems from uncertainty regarding which Hebrew verb the word derives from.

Without getting into the linguistic details of the Hebrew language, this section will offer a few simple arguments in favor of “corruption.” Thinking about the chiasmic structure of Psalms 15–24 again, Psalms 16 and 23 are prayers of trust in response to the turmoil found in Psalms 17 and 22. The word “awake” in Psalm 17:15 gives us a clue to

the author's meaning in Psalm 16:10. This rather innocuous word is frequently used to refer to resurrection or coming to life after death in the Hebrew Bible (2 Kings 4:31; Job 14:12; Isaiah 26:19; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2; and Habakkuk 2:19). Given the hostility against the speaker, it is unlikely he was describing waking up from a nap. Instead, it seems likely that his enemies succeeded in killing him. They surrounded him (Psalm 17:11) and pounced on him like a lion (Psalm 17:12). They caused the speaker's death, from which he awoke. Psalm 22 also alludes to the death of the speaker. He was laid in the "dust of death" (Psalm 22:15). He was surrounded by dogs and evildoers (Psalm 22:16). His hands and feet were pierced, and his bones are visible (Psalm 22:16–17). They cast lots for his clothing (Psalm 22:18), presumably because he would not be needing it. Psalm 23, which reveals the king's trust in God, says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4). It would make sense, then, for Psalm 16, which parallels Psalm 23 and is linked to the death scenes in Psalms 17 and 22, to refer to the resurrection of the dead.

David entitled Psalm 16 as a *miktam* (superscription). We have no way of knowing what this Hebrew title entails, but nearly all five remaining *miktam* in the Psalms (Psalms 56–60) contain the word that is translated "corruption" in Psalms 16:10, and each *miktam* alludes to death.

Finally, the word "see" in Psalm 16:10 suggests that the Hebrew word it is linked to should be translated as "corruption." Corruption or decay is something that would happen to a dead body. A pit would be a location. In Hebrew, the verb "to see" is often used with the sense of "to experience." For example, "to see death" in Psalm 89:48 means to experience death. Thus, the verb "see" refers to something that could be experienced, such as the decay or corruption brought by death. A verb of motion, such as "to walk" or "fall into," would have been used if the word in question meant "pit."

Since Psalm 16 declares that the speaker would not see the decay of death even after having died, Peter and Paul were right to claim that Psalm 16:10 anticipated the resurrection of the Messiah.

❏: *Why is Jesus's resurrection crucial for the Christian faith?*

❏: *Why is your resurrection crucial for your faith?*

APPLICATION POINT – Jesus's death on the cross was not His end. For all who put their faith in Christ, the risen Lord, death is not their end either. Death is not a pleasant subject to think about, but believers can do so with the hope of resurrection.

NEXT STEPS

The verses in this lesson concerning Peter and Paul come from occasions when they were preaching to non-believers. They were sharing the central doctrine of the gospel with those who needed to accept Christ as savior. It is not enough to learn of how the Old Testament anticipates the resurrection of Christ. You must share what you know with others who need to hear it.

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God's Word this week.

God, I am amazed by your Word. No matter how it is studied, it leads to greater faith in you.

Lord Jesus, you are the center of the Old Testament, you are the center of the New Testament, and you are the center of my life. Help me to live in worship of you.

Father, you have given hope in the resurrection. Although we want to live for righteousness now, we know this life is ultimately not our end.

God, you are my refuge and my strength. I can trust in your provision.