

## **2Q 2017 Master Teacher**

### Lesson 1

#### **THE PSALTER**

A collection of 150 songs or prayers, the book of Psalms has long been used in both Jewish and Christian worship services. These poems reflect the experience of the writer in both praise and petition. God's deliverance is sought in the midst of terrible times and His deliverance is celebrated after those times have passed. Because of the wide range of emotions and experiences that are expressed in the Psalms, this book is a great resource for today's believers, in both congregational and solitary times of prayer and petition or in praise and worship. The psalter is a book that specifically contains the psalms, oftentimes along with other devotional materials.

### Lesson 2

#### **NICODEMUS**

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who came to faith in Jesus. Although he was well-educated in the Law, when he first encountered Jesus he could not make sense of His concept of rebirth. Clearly, the message became clear soon thereafter and Nicodemus experienced the rebirth for himself. It was he who brought spices to wrap in the linens around Jesus' body while it laid in the tomb.

### Lesson 3

#### **THE RESURRECTION**

Though the Sadducees denied the belief of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus declared – without reservation – that the dead do rise to life again. After all, God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob whom Jesus asserts are alive with God when He declares this (see Matt. 22:23–33). Though much is unknown about what happens after the resurrection, Christians know that we will be given new bodies, will live in paradise with the Lord, and will never experience the effects of evil—including the pain of sin and death—ever again.

### Lesson 4

#### **JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH**

Though only the blood of Jesus justifies believers, what is implied in the term “believers” is faith. God has not seen fit to force all people to know Him and revere Him. Instead, He calls us to respond in faith to the invitation to have new life. Only through our faith in Jesus can we be renewed and be made into His image. Whatever good works we have done before or after coming to Christ are not the things that will save us. After coming to Christ, it is evidence that we have accepted the Lord's work in our lives and are striving to seek His will instead of our own.

## Lesson 5

### SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP

The leaders in Israel and later Judah were often compared to shepherds. This association comes as no surprise when one remembers that the greatest king in Israel, David, was a shepherd before he became king. Thus, like shepherds, the leaders in Israel were meant to lead the nation in the ways of the Lord, following the Him faithfully and therefore teaching the people to do the same. However, the leaders—the supposed shepherds of God’s people—were often negligent in their responsibilities and even willfully disobedient, at times. The prophets would rebuke the leaders for being poor shepherds of God’s people and prophesy about a Shepherd to come who would be faithful and keep the people safe from all danger.

## Lesson 6

### NINEVEH

Though Nineveh was a settlement for many generations, it did not reach prominence in the ancient Near East until it became the capital of Assyria under King Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.). His palace was likely the location of the famed Hanging Gardens. The city was pillaged in 612 B.C. by Babylonians and Medes, bringing an end to the Assyrian Empire. The modern city of Mosul sits on this site, and a Muslim shrine in the city was dedicated to the prophet, Jonah, until its destruction in 2014.

## Lesson 7

### JONAH’S PRAYER

Jonah prayed from the belly of the fish as though he was in Sheol. Sheol is neither heaven nor hell. In Israelite ideology, all people went there after death. This was not a place of punishment or reward. It was simply limbo, or in-between. It was thought to be beneath the world which partly explains why Jonah spoke as though he was in Sheol while he was in the depths of the sea in the fish’s belly. Sheol offered a shadowy existence for the dead and it was supposedly outside of God’s presence. In his prayer, Jonah celebrated that God saw him even when he should have been in Sheol and basically was. Yet still the Lord had power to bring Jonah back to life. For this reason, Jesus talked about the sign of Jonah as the only sign the Pharisees would receive (see Matt. 12:39–41). Jonah celebrated the life he would live once he left the place of the dead because he believed that the Lord had relented and would have mercy on him, even though he had previously run away from the Lord’s calling of him.

## Lesson 8

### CORPORATE REPENTANCE

Though Israel recognized the existence of individual sins, the prophets’ main concern was most frequently the accumulated sins of the entire nation. These sins were seen in idolatry, and in failures of justice and righteousness, especially towards those in Israel who were most easily and most often oppressed: the poor, the widows and orphans, and the foreigners. Because individuals’ sins were part of the culture of the nation, the entire nation was called to repent of evil. This was true in the city of Nineveh, in Assyria, just as it was true in Israel.

## Lesson 9

### LOVING OUR ENEMIES

Though it is not easy, Jesus calls Christians to love for our enemies. Though this love can take many different forms, we have two guidelines that can be trusted to guide us in this difficult endeavor. First, whether our enemies are near or far, personally known or powerful figures we have never met, we are called to pray for our enemies. Prayer for our enemies can soften our hearts so that we can begin to love them—a completely selfless act no matter what. Second, when we come face-to-face with the enemy, we are called to take care of them, not to do harm against them. Though our flesh wants vengeance, and may even deserve the vengeance, it is not our judgement to make. Instead, we should strive to love our enemies completely as a sign that the Lord's Kingdom is different from the kingdoms of the world.

## Lesson 10

### CANAAN

Canaan, often referred to as the Promised Land, included the land between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, though primarily not exclusively east of the Jordan River. The northern and southern borders could vary based on the strength of other tribes and the weakness of Israelite tribes. Also, this was the land that was promised to Abram and from which Isaac and his sons went to join Joseph in Egypt. The conquest of the land, recorded in Joshua, was never entirely accomplished.

## Lesson 11

### ANGELS

Angels often act as messengers from God to His people. Many stories are told in the Bible of angels visiting with God's people to bring them news of God's intentions for them. However, sometimes the angel is specifically called an angel of the Lord. At such times, it seems that the writer is speaking of Lord as though He took a physical form to visit His people Himself. However, the person who was visited by the angel of the Lord did not recognize the Lord before them or only recognized the Lord later. Though the angels themselves are plenty terrifying to the many who have met them, seeing the Lord face-to-face is a death sentence. Thus, seeing the angel of the Lord spared the faithful even as they received a message directly from Him.

## Lesson 12

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament did not dwell among God's people in the same way that He does today in the Church. Instead, the Spirit would come upon an anointed man or woman—they could be anointed with oil or water or just the Spirit Himself—and then work within that person. The Old Testament has many ways of referring to the Holy Spirit because ancient Israel did not have knowledge of the Trinity as Christians do through information today. God's Word was gradually revealing Himself, and God as Father, Son, and Spirit was not yet revealed in the Old Testament. Still, the works of the Lord were seen from creation to redemption to recreation, and His fingerprints were found on every page.

## Lesson 13

### THE PHILISTINES

The Philistines were frequent adversaries of the Israelites. These troubles began in the book of Joshua and continued throughout the ages of the monarchs. Despite being enemies of the Israelites, the most critical issue of living in close proximity to the Philistines was the allure of their gods. Dagon, Ashtaroth, and Baal-zebul were three deities the Philistines worshiped. Only by holding themselves apart from the Philistines and other nations in the land did the Israelites have any chance of remaining faithful to the Lord.