

GOD'S COVENANT IN THE PSALMS**Psalms 25; 74; 103; 111**

Memory Verse: *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments (Ps. 103:17-18 ESV).*

Background Helps:

By my count there are twenty specific references to God's "covenants" in the Psalms. We have already studied some these psalms:

- Psalm 105 in week #19 – God's covenant with Abraham
- Psalm 78 in week #22 – God's covenants with Israel and with David
- Psalms 89 and 132 in week #24 – God's covenant with David

For the next two weeks, before we turn to the teaching on God's covenants in the Prophets, we will take another look at psalms that make mention of God's covenants. This week we consider four of these Psalms: 25, 74, 103, 111. Here is some background on each of these Psalms:

- Psalm 25 is an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Notice references to God's covenant in verse 10 ("All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his *covenant* and his testimonies," probably referring to the Mosaic covenant) and in verse 14 ("The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his *covenant*" ESV).
- Psalm 74 laments the destruction of God's sanctuary, probably the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem as a result of the Babylonian invasion in 586 B. C. The psalmist pleads with God for deliverance on the basis of his covenant with his people (v. 20), in this case probably referring to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Psalm 103 is a celebration of God's covenant faithfulness to his people. Specific mention of the "covenant" only occurs in verse 18, but references to his "steadfast love" (also translated "unfailing love," or "mercy," or "lovingkindness") in verses 4, 8, 11, and 17 also celebrate his covenant loyalty.
- Psalm 111 is another acrostic poem, each successive line beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It celebrates the works of the LORD on behalf of his people, making mention of his covenant faithfulness (vv. 5, 9).

Lesson Helps:

The teacher will probably want to choose one of these four psalms to be the focus of his or her lesson, covering the whole psalm with particular attention to its relationship to God's covenants.

1. Since Psalm 25 is an acrostic poem (in Hebrew), after studying its message with particular reference to God's covenant, you might challenge your students to write their own acrostic


poems (using the English alphabet, of course!), including mention of God's covenant. In this case the poetic lines (as in Hebrew) don't have to rhyme, but they can merely employ parallelism of idea or thought (as in Hebrew).

2. Since Psalm 74 seems to be related to the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in 586 B. C., this lesson would give you the opportunity to include a story as part of your lesson (good for kids). In your lesson connect the story behind the psalm to the psalm and to God's covenant with his people.
3. Psalm 103 is one of the most beautiful psalms of praise in the Psalter. Study what it reveals about our covenant-keeping God, and then close your lesson with a time of worship in song and prayer. This psalm includes the memory verses, which could be a focus of your lesson.
4. Psalm 111 is the briefest of the four psalms studied this week, which might make it ideal for children. This psalm celebrates the works of the LORD, which display his covenant faithfulness. Since like, Psalm 25, it is an acrostic poem, you could again utilize the idea of asking your students to write a brief acrostic poem. Each line of their poems could celebrate a work of the LORD (no need to use rhyme). Then close your lesson with a time of praise.

Whichever psalm you choose, be sure to write a lesson aim and keep your lesson focused on that aim.

Remember that there are questions on the reading schedule that you could use in class.

Home Assignment:

 Read Psalm 106.

 Memorize Psalm 106:1 ESV.