

TERM TWO PART TWO

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

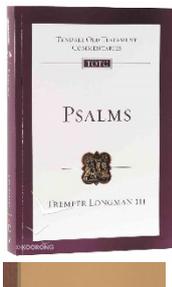
THE **PSALMS** ON SEASONS OF CHANGE

SMALL GROUP RESOURCE

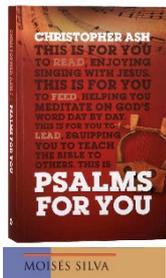
SERIES SUMMARY

PREACHING DATE	TITLE	PASSAGE
14/6/20	Understanding power	Psalms 2
21/6/20	Understanding our place	Psalms 8
28/6/20	Understanding our path	Psalms 23
5/7/20	Understanding our planet	Psalms 46
12/7/20	Understanding our Provider	Psalms 139

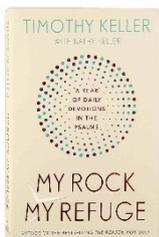
RESOURCES



Longman III, T. *Psalms* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)



Ash, C. *Psalms For You*



Keller, T. *My Rock, My Refuge: A year of daily devotions in the psalms*

STUDY FOUR

UNDERSTANDING OUR PLANET | PSALM 46

OVERVIEW

1. God's refuge when creation falls apart (vv 1-3).

Creation was a work of God to bring order out of chaos (Gen 1:1-2). Though made with the purpose and design God intended (Gen 1:31), the created world is in decay following the sin of its inhabitants (Gen 3:17-19). Nonetheless God is with us (vv 1, 7, 11), even when creation in its fallen state brings chaos in place of order (vv 2-3). Therefore, we shall not fear (v 2).

The forces of chaos in creation are never quite subdued and are always threatening the order we strive for. At times God exhibits his rule over creation to bring about his purposes so that we might see that it serves to achieve his plans. As God began history by bringing order out of chaos (Gen 1:1-2), so he acts in history using the creation to bring about redemption (Ex 15:1-10).

2. God's refuge when history fails us (vv 4-7).

V 4 begins to reveal the nature of the protection God provides for his people. A city where there is safety because God himself dwells there (v 4). The river and streams of v 4 have Eden-like qualities and remind us of the Kingdom God has in mind where true and lasting blessing is the surety of his presence. The Lord Almighty, the God of Jacob, is the fortress who will not fail like earthly kingdoms (vv 6-7). They will fall (v 6) in the same way as the mountains (v 2) even though they seek to threaten with their chaotic might. The contrast is between the true stability God provides in a world where powerful nations are fundamentally unstable. The Covid season has unearthed this reality in troublesome ways as leaders and governments have simply failed to come to grips with a creation they thought they could control. Even in the midst of this global threat, nations have seen it more as an opportunity to exercise increasing dominance over others rather than work for the common good.

3. God's refuge when both creation falls apart and history fails us (vv 8-11).

The two preceding themes are woven together in a fitting climax where the readers are invited to see (v 8) how God intends to deal with the combined chaos of natural and national powers. He makes peace by breaking the instruments of war. Against the haughty rulers throughout history, the God of creation speaks (v 10) and the earth melts (v 6). The Lord of Hosts (v 11), the Lord Almighty, the Lord who commands all armies, offers fortress protection in the turmoil of human rule. In their humbling and harnessing God is rightly exalted as the author of all powers and the protector of his people (v 11).

The New Testament points us to the one who entered creation and lived life in the confidence and fearlessness Psalm 46 calls for. He could still creation with a word (Mark 4:35-41) and stand firm against the threat of human power (John 18:36). He would even use creation (John 2:1-11; 6:1-15; 27; 9:32-33) to assert that he was the promised one who would bring all rule and reign to its intended end where every knee should bow before the exalted Lord of all (Phil 2:11). This final order from chaos is established when Jesus is seen as the one who rightly rules upon God's throne.

We struggle and toil as we come to grips with a fragile creation and our frail place within it. A frustration ordained at the hand of God (Gen 3:17-19), so that we might recognise the consequences of our desire to live life without him. Creation is tied to the future God has in mind for his redeemed and adopted children (Rom 8:22-23). We share in its groaning through our own failed experiences. It is the presence of the fortress God of Psalm 46, who provides for us in times of despair and struggle. God even reaches in with his words of comfort and confidence when our words fail us (Rom 8:26-27). No matter what our opposition (natural or national) we can be assured that if God is for us, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39). God is exalted in the earth when we live faithfully under the rule of his Son.

GETTING STARTED

1. When natural disasters or pandemics take place and people ask, “Why would God allow this to happen?” how would you respond?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Psalm 46

2. What do vv 1, 7 & 11 of the Psalm reveal for us about the author’s intentions in writing?
3. Vv 2-3 natural disasters appear to be the concern of the writer of the Psalm. In what other ways do we experience the fragility and frailty of creation?
4. Genesis 1:1-2 explains that creation was the work of God that brought order out of chaos. In Gen 1:31, God explains that what he created was very good and fit for purpose. Following the rebellion of Genesis 3, what happens to our experience of creation (Gen 3:17-19)?
5. How does Paul explain the curse placed on creation in Romans 8:20-21?

10. Jesus himself displayed his authority over creation in his earthly ministry (John 2:1-11; 6:1-15; 27; 9:32-33). What do these incidents tell us about his place in God's plans?

11. What promise does Paul make in Roman 8:38-39 about the barriers nature and history can create to our relationship with God?

TAKE AWAY

12. Should Christians be environmentalists?

13. "The only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history."
Discuss.