



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## **Psalms 103:1-22** **New Revised Standard Version** **December 16, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 16, 2018**, is from **Psalms 103:1-22**.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Psalms 103:1) Of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.**

The Psalm identifies David, the King of Israel, as the author. David addresses the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) by name: no other god compares to the LORD and the LORD alone is worthy of worship. The soul can be identified as the intellectual or reasonable part of a person that on the basis of the truths he knew about the LORD motivated David to make the commitment that his whole being and personality, his whole self, should bless (honor, praise, glorify, worship, love, thank, make happy) the LORD. The LORD, the LORD's name, the LORD's character and being is holy, is pure, is set apart from all the LORD has created. The LORD always (and never fails) to reason, choose, and act in righteous love: love always motivates the LORD to do always do what is right, what is according to the moral law, what is best for all concerned. David's Psalm inspires all believers in the LORD to worship as David did.

**(Psalms 103:2) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—**

For emphasis, David says once more that from the center of his being and personhood, his soul has chosen to think and act always in ways that will please the LORD and bring the LORD the most joy (not just during official times of temple worship). David prays to the LORD to glorify and magnify the LORD by enumerating all the benefits that can flow from faith and trust in the LORD and from the obedience that flows from love for the LORD. By listing some of the benefits that flow from being a loving and obedient child of the LORD, David hopes to never forget the benefits of knowing the LORD as his heavenly Father.

**(Psalms 103:3) who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,**

The first benefit David listed was forgiveness. Without the LORD's forgiveness, David could not have a relationship with the LORD, and neither can we. The LORD forgives iniquity (sinful, disobedient, evil, wicked, thoughts, behaviors, and practices that have sometimes enslaved us, dishonored God, and hurt others). The LORD will forgive ALL of our unholy, rebellious, wicked thoughts and deeds. Though many of our past choices and practices now seem abhorrent to us (and were certainly abhorrent to our holy God) one benefit of faith in God (now after His coming, faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior) is God's forgiveness of all our sins. When He walked on the earth as a man, the Lord Jesus Christ healed many diseases with a word, for He is God. The LORD (from the New Testament we know is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) can heal any and all diseases—by miracles and sometimes through doctors and medicines. Jesus made a medicine out of mud that He used when He put mud on the eyes of a blind man to restore his vision. Today, sometimes Jesus heals a disease by taking one of those who believe in Him to be with Him in heaven, as He took one of the thieves dying on a cross beside him to be with Him in paradise that very day.

**(Psalms 103:4) who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**

Sometimes, Jesus delivers those who believe in Him from death—from what some say should have brought death from an accident, a disease, a disaster, or the act of another person (such as in a war or by some other violent act). Certainly, the LORD will crown all who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior with the steadfast love and mercy that motivates God to give us so many blessings and benefits in this life and in the life to come. Others with discerning eyes can see the results of the steadfast love and mercy of God in our lives, just as we can see the crown on a king or queen.

**(Psalms 103:5) who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

The LORD always does good to us and only good. The LORD will sometimes discipline us as believers, and in doing so He does good and expresses His deep love for us—the LORD disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). Through reasonable discipline, the LORD renews our relationship with Him and helps us in our relationships with others. By doing us good in many ways, the LORD enables us to do what we could never do in our own strength—so much so that we can feel like the eagles who soar to great heights to achieve God's purposes.

**(Psalms 103:6) The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.**

David recognized the sad fact of oppression in this world that many suffer. He knew that his ancestors had been oppressed in Egypt during 400 years of slavery. During that 400 years, many had died from unimaginable horrors, but those with faith in the LORD received mercy, righteousness, and justice through the LORD's presence with them and unimagined blessings in eternity. Through Moses, the LORD gave righteousness and justice to those who followed Moses out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, where God gave them the Law that would work righteousness and justice among them when the people of Israel obeyed the LORD, but only those who believed and trusted in the LORD entered the Promised Land.

**(Psalms 103:7) He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.**

The LORD spoke to Moses and told him what to do to free His people from slavery under Pharaoh. He spoke to Moses and gave him the Law that He wrote on tablets of stone to teach His people right ways of living. Through Moses's leadership, the LORD acted in behalf of His people and worked miracles that defeated the gods of Egypt and led His people to believe in the LORD. Despite their complaints, the LORD met all their needs of food and water as they wandered in the wilderness. No wonder David prayed, "Bless the LORD, O my soul!"

**(Psalms 103:8) The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

When the people of Israel complained against Moses and the LORD's leading and provisions, the LORD was far more merciful and gracious than they deserved: grace is unmerited favor. The LORD became angry with them, but the LORD was mercifully slow to become angry. The LORD abounded in steadfast love for His people, love that influenced Him to exercise patience toward them and continue to do good to them, love that would discipline them and lead many of them to return to faith and trust in the LORD.

**(Psalms 103:9) He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.**

After His people have sinned, by grace the LORD will not continually admonish, rebuke, or remind them of their past evil deeds. The LORD will give us exactly the discipline we need if we do not repent of our sins and return to obeying the LORD. When we sin, we anger the LORD, but the LORD does not remain angry with us (or hold a grudge against us) forever. The LORD will not express His anger against us to hurt us for the sake of hurting us or to "get even" with us. The LORD will express His anger against us for our own good as an expression of His mercy, righteousness, and justice, to lead us back to faith in Him, to lead us to change our ways.

**(Psalms 103:10) He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

The LORD will deal with us in lovingkindness according to His holy and loving character instead of dealing with us according to our sins and iniquities. The LORD's lovingkindness toward those who have rebelled against Him and have done evil stands in sharp contrast to the ways our fallen human nature sometimes leads us against those who have offended us. The LORD deals with us to make us better people, more loving people, and loyal followers of the LORD. If the LORD repaid us according to our iniquities and sins, we could never stand before Him without guilt and at peace with Him and within ourselves.

**(Psalms 103:11) For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;**

To grant us assurance of the LORD's gracious love and to give us peace within ourselves and with Him, the LORD tells us through David that His unfailing love is as high as the heavens above the earth. Even with modern space probes, scientists have never reached the limits of the heavens. The love of the LORD has no limits toward those who fear Him. God's steadfast love for those who reverence His name and honor His Law of Love is immeasurably great and beyond our comprehension. We praise the LORD for Who He is, for what He does, and for what He requires of those who love Him.

**(Psalms 103:12) as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.**

The LORD removes the true moral guilt of those who return to Him and reverence His Name. Through faith in Jesus Christ, the LORD has provided the Way to give us the complete forgiveness we need. The LORD will absolutely and totally remove the trespasses and sins of those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The LORD saved the Old Testament saints, such as David, by grace through their faith that the LORD would send the Redeemer as He promised. With a believing heart, even when suffering, Job proclaimed, "For I know that my Redeemer

lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25). In sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, the LORD sent the Redeemer He promised.

**(Psalms 103:13) As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.**

David compared the compassion of the LORD to the compassion of a truly loving father among the people of God. But some people never know the love and compassion of a father until they come to know God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ. The LORD shows the compassion of a true Father to those who fear or reverence Him, to those who honor the LORD as their heavenly Father instead of living in obstinate rebellion and sin against the LORD and His commandments. Apart from the grace of God, those living apart from the LORD will not recognize His love for them as their Creator and Lord.

**(Psalms 103:14) For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.**

One reason the LORD shows compassion toward us is the LORD created us from the dust of the ground and the LORD knows our bodies will return to the dust of the ground. The LORD knows the inclinations of our hearts. Our inclinations may be evil only continually as most were in the days of Noah. We are imperfect human beings; our heart inclinations may be to love, to seek, and to serve the LORD at all times, even though we are sometimes overcome by temptations from the world, our flesh, and the devil leading to sin, sorrow, repentance, and a return to obedience.

**(Psalms 103:15) As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field;**

Most grass soon turns from green to brown and many beautiful flowers are seasonal. David knew and wanted to remind us that everyone will die someday. We are mortal and no matter how long we may live in good health, whether living for the LORD or living in sin for ourselves, we will die (prior to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ). Our lives will

seem too short to us no matter how long we may live, so let us resolve to spend every day in the service of our loving Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who suffered and died for us.

**(Psalms 103:16) for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.**

In Psalm 90:12, Moses prayed for us: “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” David’s Psalm encourages us to number our days. David wanted us to get wisdom from our observations and thinking about how many days we might live. The older we get the fewer days we will have to live in this world, so we need to make each moment count for God, knowing that He loves us and wants us to love Him and trust Him and spend eternity with Him after our body dies.

**(Psalms 103:17) But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children,**

People pass away from a life on earth and go to reside with the LORD or in a place apart from the LORD. The steadfast love of the LORD will never pass away and will remain forever with those who seek to obey the LORD in everything; that is, those who fear Him. Those the LORD has graciously saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ love the LORD and want to express their gratitude and love for the LORD by serving Him and obeying Him now and throughout eternity. In John 14:15, Jesus expressly declared: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” When we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, that makes a difference in how we live and talk; therefore, even our children’s children will come to know God’s righteousness (the right and loving ways of living) as children of God.

**(Psalms 103:18) to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.**

The teaching of David in this psalm is almost identical to the teaching of Jesus Christ. David lived and served the LORD under the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ made a New Covenant in His blood: Jesus suffered and died

for us making it possible for our righteous LORD to mercifully and justly forgive us for our sins when we put our faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and forgiveness. Having trusted in Jesus, our Heavenly Father adopts us as His children into His family, and in response we keep the New Covenant and obey the commands of Jesus. And when we fail, we still trust in Jesus.

**(Psalms 103:19) The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.**

After considering the limited lifespan of people on the earth, we learn the great difference between God and ourselves. We derive immeasurable assurance from knowing the fact that the LORD and His steadfast love for us will never end. Furthermore, the LORD rules over all creation, so nothing can separate us from the LORD and His love. The LORD is King and the LORD established an eternal kingdom, and when we come in faith to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior we become loyal subjects of our great King, the King of the universe, whose kingdom will never end, and whose Name we will sing praises to forever and ever.

**(Psalms 103:20) Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word.**

The LORD is wonderful in all He says and does, in Who the LORD is as revealed in the Bible, in nature, and within us; therefore, we want to do His bidding, obey His word, and bring Him great happiness. As we read the Bible, we learn how to bring joy to the LORD. Furthermore, David calls the angels of the LORD, who are great in might and holy splendor, to use the abilities God gave them to do the word of the LORD and obey every command the LORD gives them.

**(Psalms 103:21) Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.**

The LORD's hosts include the armies of the LORD in His heavenly kingdom. The LORD's armies enabled the people of Israel to escape from slavery in Egypt, defeat their enemies, enter the Promised Land, and inhabit the cities of those the LORD dispossessed. The angels that serve us



and meet our needs as the LORD commands them do His will and bring Him and us happiness. In Hebrews 1:14 we read this about the angels of God: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” All intelligent beings have good reasons to love, serve, and worship the LORD.

**(Psalms 103:22) Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul.**

Every being, every plant, animal, bird, fish, and other works of the LORD owe their existence to the LORD. Every work of the LORD is magnificent and reveals something of the nature and character of the LORD. Everything the LORD has created should obey, honor and bring joy to the LORD as the LORD enables them. For all these reasons and more, the LORD blesses us, and we bless the LORD. The LORD is worthy to be praised.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What are some ways you can bless the LORD?
2. What are some of the benefits people can receive from trusting in God?
3. What does the LORD expect from His people?
4. Does the LORD ever get angry with people because of their sins? Explain your answer.
5. How great is the LORD’s steadfast love toward those who fear Him?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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