

P
S
A
L
M
S

The
Songs
36

PSALMS - The SONGS

Thirty-six

Leaning on Truths About God to See Light

READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every reference to the LORD, or God, including all pronouns and synonyms, with a red triangle.

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every reference to the upright in heart, including all pronouns and synonyms, with a blue capital "R+".

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every reference to the wicked, along with all pronouns and synonyms (i.e. ungodly, etc.) with an orange capital "W".

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every reference to evil with an orange "do not" symbol (i.e. an orange circle with a diagonal slash through it).

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every comparison with a pink equal sign.

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every reference to time with a blue box.

Read through **Psalm 36** and mark every contrast with a pink diagonal line.

Read through **Psalm 36** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. No fear of God before the ungodly
2. God's lovingkindness to all of creation
3. Continued lovingkindness for those who know God

READ AND ANSWER

Psalm 36:1-4

What character is introduced in the first line of this **Psalm**?

What speaks to the ungodly?

Where does the ungodly hear the “voice of transgression”?

If the ungodly hears the voice of transgression in his heart (and he does) is it because the voice of transgression is loud or is it because the ungodly is listening and embracing transgressions?

What is not before the eyes of the ungodly? (What doesn't the ungodly have?)

Why doesn't the ungodly have a fear of God?

What is flattering in the eyes of the ungodly?

1.

2.

How does the ungodly view the discovery of his iniquity?

Does the ungodly have a hatred for iniquity?

How is the speech of the ungodly described?

1.

2.

What has the ungodly ceased to understand and do?

1.

2.

What does the ungodly do while laying on his bed at night?

Where has the ungodly put himself?

What does the ungodly not despise?

Psalm 36:5-9

What is true about God's lovingkindness?

What does it mean that God's lovingkindness extends to the heavens?

What is true about God's faithfulness?

What does it mean that God's faithfulness reaches to the skies?

What is true about God's righteousness?

What are the mountains of God?

What does it mean that God's righteousness is like the mountains of God?

What is true about God's judgments?

What does it mean that God's judgments are like a great deep? (What aspect of the great deep is comparable to God's judgments?)

What is the common theme of the heavens, the skies, the mountains of God, and a great deep?

Why does the psalmist switch from the topic of the ungodly to the topic of God's lovingkindness, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgments? (Ask God to help you see the connection.)

What does the LORD preserve?

1.

2.

Why does the LORD preserve man and beast? (Get your answer from the context!)

What does the psalmist say is true of God's lovingkindness?



Point of Depth

The Hebrew word for “precious” is *yaqar* and is a primitive root that means to be heavy. It has the idea of being valuable.

Why is God's lovingkindness so valuable? (According to the context.)

Who are the children of men?

What are the children of men able to do?

Refuge from what, or Whom?

From what, or Whom, do the children of men need a refuge?

What are the children of men able to drink?

1.

2.

Why are they able to do so?

Where is the fountain of life found?

How can we see light?

Psalm 36:10-12

What does the psalmist entreat God to do?

1.

2.

To whom does the psalmist ask God to continue His lovingkindness?

To whom does the psalmist ask God to continue His righteousness?

What does the psalmist ask God to guard him from?

1.

2.

What would happen to the psalmist if the foot of pride came upon him?

What does the psalmist believe the hand of the wicked would do to him if they could?

Where have the doers of iniquity fallen? (Hint: Compare **verses 1-2** and **verses 10-12**.)

What has happened to the doers of iniquity because of their pride?

1.

2.

READ AND REASON

The three segments in this **Psalm** hold three groups or individuals—**verses 1-4** speak about the ungodly and his arrogant ways toward his Creator, **verses 5-9** speaks about God and His gracious ways toward His creation. The final segment, **verses 10-12**, is a humble prayer from the upright to be protected from becoming like the ungodly, and thus incurring the results of their actions.

In the middle of the **Psalm** are a couple of verses that might be very familiar to you because of a song that has been popular for many years. I've written the words out for you below.

*Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens.
Your faithfulness stretches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like a mighty mountain. Yeah.
And Your justice flows like the ocean's tides.*

*And I will lift my voice to worship You, my King.
And I will find my strength in the shadow of Your wings.*

If you've attended church for many years you might have heard or sung it. This song is obviously taken from **Psalm 36** using **verses 5-7**. The song feels like you are worshiping God... however... this popular song is not true to **Psalm 36** at all and actually robs God of His true Glory portrayed in **Psalm 36**.

Perhaps to some this song might not seem like a problem, but it is a problem... a big problem. We are commanded to handle the Word of God accurately—and that goes for musicians and those who sing their songs, as well as Bible teachers!

Every single time someone hears or sings this song, its "truth" is written deeper on any person's heart who believes it. While most (but not all) of the individual lines are true, their message as a whole is contrary to **Psalm 36**.

While I was writing this Observation Bible Study Guide, the song came to mind so I looked it up online. I knew the message of the song had words from **Psalm 36**, but I also remembered its message was not the message of **Psalm 36**. I read the words carefully, noting where and how they deviated from God's Word. I watched the "Your Love Oh Lord" official music video. The message of the song and its video was exactly as I remembered it—which was definitely not the message of **Psalm 36**.

First let me show you where it deviates from **Psalm 36** and then we'll talk about its teaching compared to the teaching of **Psalm 36**. My purpose is not to pick apart this song (rather it is to encourage you to stay true to the Word of God in every area of your life) so I will point out only two departures that it makes from **Psalm 36** itself.

The first and most obvious is that it rips 2 1/2 verses (**verses 5-7**) out of their context and makes them stand alone, which consequently gives them a new meaning. The second is that it actually distorts the meaning of the second half of **verse 7** by deleting one of the words God chose and inserting a different one that has absolutely no connection to the **Psalm** at all, which changes the meaning of the verses and the **Psalm** once again.

The context of **verses 5-7** is **verses 1-4** and **8-12**. They need each other to convey the message God has sent to us in **Psalm 36**. The message is that God is good to His entire creation, even those who are blatantly ungodly and arrogant about their sin. He is the source of their life and blessings. But... despite His lovingkindness, He will be faithful to Himself and the Covenants He has made—therefore He will judge—and His judgments will never end until there is no more sin! The **Psalm** includes the prayer of the upright man pleading with God to guard him from the same behaviors and eventual fate of the ungodly man. The **Psalm** praises God for His ways, even in the middle of an ungrateful and obnoxious creation.

The message of **Psalm 36**, as written by God, is perfectly true to the rest of Scripture.

Exodus 34:6-8

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

Did you notice Moses' response to this information about the LORD? He very quickly lowered his body to the ground (in order to show just how high and exalted the LORD is) and worshiped Him. He did not try to reword what God had said and make it better.

Honestly, when people sing this song and they get to the line where it says, "Your justice flows like the ocean's tides" they must be in some form of "la la land" in order to think

God's judgments are a pleasant thing! Judgments, or justice, are the stuff **Revelation** is made of—there is nothing pleasant *about* it—except to be saved *from* it!

That's why changing the word "refuge" to "strength" (which is what they did) is so wrong. God does *not* give strength to endure or escape His judgments. The author of the song chose to use the word "strength" instead of the word God chose, "refuge". The word they chose is simply the English word "strength"—it means whatever it means. But the word God chose was "refuge" and is the Hebrew word *chasah* and means to flee for protection! God's word fits with the meaning of the entire **Psalm**. Their word does not even fit by pulling the line out of context, much less the **Psalm**. In other words, not only is the line pulled out of context, but a word is ripped out and replaced to change the meaning even further!

Finding strength in the shadow of His wings just doesn't make any reasonable sense. The shadow of His wings is a picture of God providing protection, not giving strength.

Why isn't God's message good enough? Why use **Psalm 36** at all if you are going to change what God says in it?

Verses 5 and 6 are way too often taken out of their context.

Why?

Possibly because of the combination of two main factors. First, most people never actually study the Bible, they just "hear" about it from one source or another, accurate or not.

Second, people like to feel good. By divorcing these verses from their context they can enjoy a warm, fuzzy song which paints God as a kind, benevolent figure.

Don't get me wrong—He most certainly is a kind, benevolent God, but the context of the **Psalm** demands that you understand why the psalmist brings up the point in the first place.

He brings it up because of the first paragraph of the **Psalm**—that the world is full of ungodly, wicked people. He assumes the listener understands God's basic response to those who have no fear of Him—His wrath.

The righteousness of God is not talking about an obligatory generosity to the children of men. Rather, it's referring to the fact that God always does everything according to His righteousness. *Always*—His righteousness is like the mighty mountains of God—which will never be moved.

In other words, if you have done wrong (like the ungodly in the first paragraph) you can expect (because God is Who He is and never changes) to receive God's wrath for that unrighteousness. And if you have done right (like the upright in the last paragraph) you

can expect (because God is Who He is and never changes) that God will spend His wrath on the unrighteous.

This is truly something the Christian can praise God for. Knowing that He will dispense perfect righteousness in all that He does is a good thing... a very good thing!

His judgments are like a great deep because He judges every last action of men—despite an unmeasurable amount of sin, He has plenty of judgments to address each and every one.

If this **Psalm** started at **verse 5**, we could imagine a different thrust of meaning from the psalmist—one that fit more with the warm, fuzzy feeling. Even so, **verse 6** demands that everyone who has been created (as well as everything that has been created) pay homage to the Creator's righteousness and judgments, which do not always feel so warm and fuzzy to the creation.

Nevertheless, this **Psalm** did not begin with **verse 5**—it began with **verses 1-4**, which describe the ungodly in no uncertain terms and therefore determines our understanding of **verses 5** and on.

The ungodly deserve quick retaliation from the Creator for their insubordination, yet, His lovingkindness allows Him to delay His wrath, and continue to let them partake of His glorious bounty on the earth.

...until the time His wrath is finally and completely revealed.

It's so sad to me... God's judgments are so often hidden and thrown away because people don't like that part of Him. It happens with the Gospel all the time. The true Gospel begins with God's wrath (read **Romans**), but people dispose of that little irritant and start with "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" instead, which makes the entire message impotent. Without the need for refuge, there is no good news...

 Segment by Segment

**Try titling these segments yourself.
Ask God to help you.**

Verses 1-4

Verses 5-9

Verses 10-12

~ Purpose of Psalm 36

**Try to identify the purpose of Psalm 36.
The purpose simply states “why the Psalmist wrote the Psalm”.**

~ Theme of Psalm 36

**Try giving Psalm 36 a title by identifying its theme.
The theme simply states “what the Psalm is about”.**
