

A black and white photograph of a man sitting on a rocky ledge, looking out over a vast, misty mountain range. The man is in profile, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants. The background is a soft-focus landscape of rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky.

## STUDY TWO

PSALM 91 || HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS

The beautiful, reassuring words of Psalm 91 have been given a beautiful, soothing treatment by Sons of Korah. You'll find a video file online at <http://new.mpc.org.au/singwithjesus> ... click on the link to Psalm 91, and listen as you follow the words.

What did you think?

How does this song make you feel?

Which statement best reflects your understanding?

*The Christian life is about trusting God  
so that bad things won't happen.*

*The Christian life is about trusting God  
when bad things happen.*

**ISRAELITE IDEAL**

Listen to or read Psalm 91 again, noting all the assurances given to whoever trusts in God.

1. In your own words, what kind of assurances are given by this psalm?

verses 3-6

verses 7-8

verses 10-12

verses 15-16

2. Do these assurances mean never facing trouble? What do they mean?

3. Do you wish you had these assurances for yourself? What difference would it make to your life?

4. What are the conditions for receiving the psalm's assurances?

verses 1-2

verse 9

verse 14

5. What ideal behaviour and result does this psalm hold out?

## ISRAEL'S FAILURE & JESUS' FULFILMENT

Israel certainly didn't fulfil this ideal. They were famous for **not** trusting God. In their wilderness journey between Egypt and Canaan, they doubted God would give them food. They doubted God would give them water. They doubted God would save them from their enemies. The book of Deuteronomy reflects on this sad tale and the lessons Israel needed to learn from it. But they never did. No one in Israel lived out the kind of trust in God you see in Psalm 91.

And now Jesus' trust is tested. Just after he is baptised and declared the 'Son of God' (the Psalm 2 kind), he's led by God to be tested in the wilderness. And that's where Psalm 91 springs up again, though not from someone you might expect...

### Read Matthew 4:1-11

6. Satan assumes that Psalm 91 is really about Jesus. Why would that be?
7. If Jesus had tested God - if he'd felt the need for God to prove his trustworthiness - what would have been wrong with that?
8. Every one of Jesus' answers to Satan are quotes from Deuteronomy: lessons in trusting God which Israel never learnt, but clearly Jesus has. What confirmation of Psalm 91 does Jesus receive in Matthew 4:11?

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: " **He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.**" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and **angels came and attended him.**

## SING WITH JESUS

It seems that Jesus is prepared to trust God in a way that the rest of Israel never managed. Even so, in the rest of Jesus' life, he doesn't seem to be protected by God in the way Psalm 91 promises – especially as he's being nailed to the cross! At that point in Matthew's gospel, the issue of Psalm-91-style trust in God comes up again as Jesus is mocked:

*“The chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’**”*

Matthew 27:41-43

9. If you already know why Jesus is choosing to die on the cross, what's so ironic about what the teachers and elders are saying?
  
10. In his life, Jesus is opposed, rejected, abandoned, betrayed, shamed, tortured and killed; but finally, he is raised from the dead. What assurance does this give about the promises of Psalm 91?
  
11. If we follow Jesus, how far might we have to trust God before seeing the Psalm 91 assurances fulfilled for us?

Listen to Psalm 91 by Sons of Korah again. This time, consciously think about how this psalm was true for Jesus. Even through death, God protected him and brought him everlasting life. And because he died for you, if you trust in him, then your ultimate protection and salvation is actually resurrection, guaranteed by Jesus' own resurrection.