

LECTURE 19: PSALMS

“The God who rules through his Messiah”

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I. Orienting Data

- A. Canonical Role:** Foundational statement on life in the covenant
- B. Focus:** How to worship the sovereign God by celebrating and identifying with the Christ’s journey from tribulation unto triumph. We can tag the whole “The Prayers of the Christ and the Songs of the Saved.”
- C. Content:**
 - 1. The “hymnbook of hope” of the 2nd temple period, when no king sat on the throne.
 - 2. 150 psalms of rich diversity (but Pss. 9–10 and 42–43 are each single psalms) grouped into five books, each with a concluding doxology.
 - 3. Your professor believes that most psalms are direct (as opposed to typological) prophecy, expressing either words by Christ or about Christ. They anticipate the sufferings and triumph of the Christ as Lord of all. For all of us who find refuge in him, the psalms become ours, serving as our laments, thanksgivings, and joys as we follow the Christ on his journey of tribulation unto triumph (see VII below).
- D. Date of Composition:** The psalms themselves date from the time of Moses (Ps. 90) to after exile (Ps. 107) (ca. 1400–400 B.C.); the collection in its present form may be part of the reform movement reflected in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.
- E. Emphases:**
 - 1. The sufferings of the Anointed One at the hands of God’s enemies.
 - 2. The triumph of the Anointed One over God’s enemies.

3. The hope of the Davidic covenant promises only for those who find refuge in the Anointed One.

II. Psalm Titles and Historical Background:

A. Are the Psalm Titles Historically Accurate and Inspired?

1. Ps. 18 is attributed to David—a fact confirmed by 2 Sam. 22:1.
2. The Psalm titles are part of the earliest Hebrew manuscripts, and the fact that the LXX translators struggled over the technical terms proves that the titles themselves were established long before the Greek versions were begun.
3. NT use of the Psalms appears to assume the reliability and inspiration of the Psalm titles:
 - a. In Matt. 22:41–46 (//), Jesus argues for his own divinity based on the fact that David wrote Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.’” Both the MT and LXX attribute this Psalm to David, and Jesus’ use confirms the viability of the title.
 - b. The citation of Ps. 16:8–11 in Acts 2:25–29 attributes the words to David (= “for David says” [*David gar legei*]), in alignment with the MT and LXX superscription.
 - c. In Acts 4:25–26, Ps 2:1–2 is cited, which has no superscription in either the MT or LXX. The NT introduction, however, asserts that God spoke “by our father through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David, your servant” (*tou patros heæmoæn dia pneumatos hagiou stomatos David paidos sou*).
 - d. The use of Ps. 95:7–11 in Heb. 4:7 asserts that Ps. 95:7–11 came “through David” (*en David*), which either is using David’s name as shorthand for the whole Psalter or is attributing Psalm 95 to David, as is made explicit in the LXX title alone (no title being found in the MT). (NOTE: From the perspective of textual criticism, it makes more sense that a Greek translator would attribute more psalms to David rather than to remove titles; this explains why the LXX would include more “Davidic” psalms.)
4. Conclusions:
 - a. The psalm titles are clearly very early, supplying a historically reliable tradition concerning authorship and setting.
 - b. While some questions persist, there appears to be no legitimate reason not to believe they are inspired and therefore authoritative, were added by the original authors or editors, and should influence one’s interpretation of the various psalms.

B. The Makeup of the Psalm Titles:

1. Of the 150 psalms, all but thirty-four of them have some form of title (i.e., superscription) that includes notes about the performance, type, author, purpose, and/or historical origin of the various psalms.¹ The only title with all these parts is Psalm 60, which opens: “To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth. A miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-Naharaim and with Aram-Zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.” We can distinguish the various parts of the title as follows:

¹ Following comparative data from the ancient Near East, the pattern in Habakkuk 3, and internal clues within the book of Psalms itself, Bruce Waltke argues that we should actually divide the present psalm superscripts into superscripts and subscripts, with the fifty-five musical notations including “to the musical director/choirmaster” going with the psalms that precede. He believes the superscripts relate to a psalm’s composition and the subscripts to its performance. See Bruce K. Waltke, “Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 583–96.

- a. Expanded performance instructions (P): “To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth”
 - b. Type of psalm (T): “A miktam”
 - c. Author (A): “Of David”
 - d. Purpose (Pu): “For instruction”
 - e. Historical origin (H): “When he strove with Aram-Naharaim and with Aram-Zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt”
2. According to the titles, David authored each of the fourteen psalms that include a historical note.
 - a. Of these, most show signs of lament (except Pss. 18, 30, 34) and all but Psalm 30 are either expressions of thanks or praise after deliverance (Pss. 18, 34) or cries of distress while running from enemies, experiencing betrayal, engaging in battle, or confessing sin (chs. 3, 7[?], 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142).
 - b. God thus led David on his own journey of suffering in order to create a typological context from which to predict the ultimate sufferings of the Christ and the subsequent glories. The titles ground David’s messianic predictions in history and help us to see David’s life as pointing to the Christ’s.
 - c. It’s as if God told David, “I am going to tell you how your redeemer will be burned at the stake and then rise from the dead, so in order to prepare you for this vision of suffering, I want you to hold your hand over a candle for one minute.” These historical signals in the psalm titles supply the image of the candle, whereas it seems possible (if not likely) the body of the psalms supply the direct predictions of the Christ on his journey through tribulation unto triumph. And those who identify with him in his suffering and who find refuge in him as their protector can in turn pray his prayers. David and the saints of the OT period could sing these songs only in light of what they knew God would secure for them through the coming anointed one, the Christ. David’s words became his prayers only in light of the one he anticipated.
 3. The Psalm titles place the seventy-three Davidic psalms mostly in Books 1, 2, and 5.² The higher frequency of Davidic psalms at the beginning and end allows the whole Psalter to bear a Davidic-messianic stamp. While the sins of the Davidic line called the kingdom hope into question, the framers of the Psalter stressed from beginning to end that God would deliver Israel’s king and those associated with him and that he would preserve both the king and his kingdom forever.
 4. While some psalm titles speak of events from which the psalms arose, the psalms themselves are almost always devoid of direct reference to specific historical situations. This distinguishes the body of the psalms from their title, suggesting that the psalm bodies are not relegated to a specific time in the life of David. It also makes it possible for the psalmist’s voice to become the voice of all finding refuge in the Anointed One in all times and cultures.

C. Canonical Significance:

1. The portrait of David in the headings appears to draw on the book of Samuel, not Chronicles, and this links the Davidic psalms themselves more closely with the actual time of the monarchy and supports their historical veracity.
2. The higher frequency of Davidic psalms at the beginning and end of the Psalter puts a Davidic (or Messianic) stamp on the whole. The canonical(s) finalized the Psalter

² The Septuagint (LXX) expands the list of Davidic psalms by fourteen; see Brueggemann, “Psalms 4: Titles,” 614.

when there was no king on the throne. As such, they were singing the Davidic psalms as pointing forward, not backward, recalling the promises for a new David and allowing the whole Psalter to provide messianic music that hopes in the future Davidic kingdom on the other side of exile and initial restoration.

Fig. 18.1. Psalm Title Attribution

<i>Attribution</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
Ethan the Ezrahite	1x	89
Moses	1x	90
Solomon	2x	72, 127
The Sons of Korah	11x	42, 43–49, 84–85, 87–88; Heman the Ezrahite is also accredited Ps. 88
Asaph	12x	50, 73–83
Anonymous	50x	1–2, 10, 33, 43, 66–67, 71, 91–100, 102, 104–107, 111–121, 123, 125–126, 128–130, 132, 134–137, 146–150
David	73x	3–9, 11–32, 34–41, 51–65, 68–70, 86, 101, 103, 108–110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145
Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie.		

Fig. 18.2. Psalm Title Attribution by Placement

	Sub-Genre	Title	Author		Sub-Genre	Title	Author		Sub-Genre	Title	Author
1	W		Anonymous	51	L	PTAH	David	101	R	TA	David
2	R		Anonymous	52	U	PTAH	David	102	L	TPu	Anonymous
3	L	TAH	David	53	L	PTA	David	103	P	A	David
4	L	PTA	David	54	L	PTAH	David	104	P		Anonymous
5	L	PTA	David	55	L	PTA	David	105	P		Anonymous
6	L	PTA	David	56	L	PTAH	David	106	L		Anonymous
7	L	TAH	David	57	L	PTAH	David	107	Th		Anonymous
8	P	PA	David	58	L	PTA	David	108	L	TTA	David
9	M	PTA	David	59	L	PTAH	David	109	L	PTA	David
10	M		Anonymous	60	L	PTAPuH	David	110	R	TA	David
11	T	PA	David	61	L	PA	David	111	P		Anonymous
12	L	PTA	David	62	U	PTA	David	112	W		Anonymous
13	L	PTA	David	63	L	TAH	David	113	P		Anonymous
14	L	PA	David	64	L	PTA	David	114	P		Anonymous
15	Lit	TA	David	65	M	PTAT	David	115	U		Anonymous
16	T	TA	David	66	Th	PTT	Anonymous	116	Th		Anonymous
17	L	TA	David	67	U	PTT	Anonymous	117	P		Anonymous
18	R	PTAH	David	68	U	PTAT	David	118	Th		Anonymous
19	M	PTA	David	69	L	PA	David	119	M		Anonymous
20	R	PTA	David	70	L	PAPu	David	120	L	TPu	Anonymous
21	R	PTA	David	71	L		Anonymous	121	T	TPu	Anonymous
22	L	PTA	David	72	R	A	Solomon	122	P	TPuA	David
23	T	TA	David	73	W	TA	Asaph	123	L	TPu	Anonymous
24	Lit	TA	David	74	L	TA	Asaph	124	Th	TPuA	David
25	M	A	David	75	U	PTAT	Asaph	125	T	TPu	Anonymous
26	L	A	David	76	P	PTAT	Asaph	126	L	TPu	Anonymous
27	L	A	David	77	L	PTA	Asaph	127	W	TPuA	Solomon
28	L	A	David	78	H	TA	Asaph	128	W	TPu	Anonymous
29	P	TA	David	79	L	TA	Asaph	129	T	TPu	Anonymous
30	Th	TATH	David	80	L	PTAT	Asaph	130	L	TPu	Anonymous
31	M	PTA	David	81	U	PA	Asaph	131	T	TPuA	David
32	M	TA	David	82	L	TA	Asaph	132	R	TPu	Anonymous
33	P		Anonymous	83	L	TTA	Asaph	133	U	TPuA	David
34	M	AH	David	84	P	PTA	Sons of Korah	134	P	TPu	Anonymous
35	L	A	David	85	L	PTA	Sons of Korah	135	P		Anonymous
36	M	PA	David	86	L	TA	David	136	P		Anonymous
37	W	A	David	87	P	TAT	Sons of Korah	137	L		Anonymous
38	L	TAPu	David	88	L	TTAPTA	Sons of Korah*	138	Th	A	David
39	L	PTA	David	89	M	TA	Ethan the Ezrahite	139	U	PTA	David
40	M	PTA	David	90	L	TA	Moses	140	L	PTA	David
41	L	PTA	David	91	T		Anonymous	141	L	TA	David
42	L	PTA	Sons of Korah	92	Th	TTPu	Anonymous	142	L	TAHT	David
43	L		Anonymous	93	P		Anonymous	143	L	TA	David
44	L	PTA	Sons of Korah	94	L		Anonymous	144	R	A	David
45	R	PTAT	Sons of Korah	95	P		Anonymous	145	P	TPuA	David
46	P	PAPT	Sons of Korah	96	P		Anonymous	146	P		Anonymous
47	P	PTA	Sons of Korah	97	P		Anonymous	147	P		Anonymous
48	P	TTA	Sons of Korah	98	P	T	Anonymous	148	P		Anonymous
49	W	PTA	Sons of Korah	99	P		Anonymous	149	P		Anonymous
50	U	TA	Asaph	100	P	TPu	Anonymous	150	P		Anonymous

*Psalm 88 is also attributed to Heman the Ezrahite.

KEY for Sub-Genre: “L” Lament; “T” Trust; “Th” Thanksgiving; “P” Praise; “R” Royal; “W” Wisdom; “Lit” Liturgy; “H” Historical; “M” Mixed; “U” Unclear.

Key for Title: “P” Performance: “To the choirmaster”; “T” Type: “A Psalm”; “A” Author: “of X(Proper Name)”; “Pu” Purpose; “H” Historical Context; **Bold:** Something distinct or expanded

III. Literary Overview

A. Characteristics:

1. 5 books, thus recalling the 5 books of the Law but now in the mouth of the new and greater Moses (= the Anointed One).
2. Each book ends in doxology, stressing that the goal of each portion is praise to God.
 - a. *Book 1*: Ps 41:13. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.
 - b. *Book 2*: Ps 72:18–19. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!
 - c. *Book 3*: Ps 89:52. Blessed be Yahweh forever! Amen and Amen.
 - d. *Book 4*: Ps 106:48. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise Yah(weh)!
 - e. *Book 5*: Pss 146–150. Praise Yah(weh)! (Pss 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6)
3. The whole is framed by an introduction (Pss 1–2) and conclusion (Pss 146–150) that address the themes of wisdom, eschatology, and praise (or, as Crutchfield asserts in *Psalms in Their Context*, walking, waiting, and worshipping). Both frames are messianic in focus, identifying the “Anointed One” as the blessed man who overcome global disdain, saves the nations, and subjects his enemies (Pss 1–2) and who stands as the horn of redemption for God’s people (Ps 148:14; cf. 1 Sam 2:10).
4. The text highlights that God’s supremacy and majesty are magnified in and through his anointed king, who represents his sovereignty and who works his justice on earth. The Anointed One perfectly embodies a life surrendered to God’s law and therefore represents the model human (Ps 1; cf. Deut 17:18–20). The Messiah oversees God’s world, demands allegiance from every global power, and alone provides rescue from divine wrath (Ps 2). The praise due Yahweh (Pss 146–150) is a praise enjoyed only on account of our connection with God’s earthly king (Ps 148:14).
5. The Psalms move from lament to praise and appear to follow an overarching pattern from kingdom crisis to kingdom restoration and consummation, all of which finds clarity in the Anointed King. The Psalter is fronted with Davidic psalms and ends with a concentration of Davidic psalms, which suggests the whole has been drafted as messianic music in order to stir hope in the promised future David.

B. Basic Structure:

Book 1	Ps 1	<i>Walking with the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Wisdom)	Intro
	Ps 2	<i>Waiting in the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Eschatology)	
	Pss 3–41	Almost all Davidic [Doxology: 41:13] (Kingdom crisis)	Body
Book 2	Pss 42–72	Almost all Davidic [Doxology: 72:18–19] (Kingdom expected)	
Book 3	Pss 73–89	Almost no Davidic [Doxology: 89:52] (Kingdom judged)	
Book 4	Pss 90–106	Almost no Davidic [Doxology: 106:48] (Kingdom in exile)	
Book 5	Pss 107–145	Higher number of Davidic (Kingdom restored and consummated)	
	Pss 146–150	<i>Worshipping on account of the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Praise)	Concl

IV. The Messianic Introduction: Psalms 1–2

A. Psalms 1–2 Introduce the Whole Psalter

1. Links:
 - a. Neither Psalm has a title.
 - b. Framed by a “blessed” formula (1:1; 2:12)
 - c. Catchwords: “blessed” (1:1; 2:12); “way” (1:1, 6; 2:12); “sit” (1:1; 2:4); “meditate/plot” (1:2; 2:1); “perish” (1:6; 2:12)
2. 6th century Greek Codex D (NT Greek ms) and some other witnesses introduce Paul’s citation of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33 with “as also it is written in the first psalm,” which indicates either that Psalms 1 and 2 were considered one psalm or that there was a Psalter that started with Psalm 2. Most likely, the lack of title, the framing “blessed” formula (1:1; 2:12), and the use of catchwords throughout suggest that at least some considered Psalms 1–2 a single psalm.
3. In light of the identification of the 1st person speech with God’s earthly king in 2:7, Psalms 1–2 together suggest that the Psalter as a whole is to be read as a *messianic* document, the voice of the king as representative of the people.
4. The pair begins, “Blessed is *the man*,” and ends, “Blessed are those who take refuge in *him*.” The “man” of Ps 1:1 relates to “the congregation of the righteous ones” in Ps 1:5 in that the latter is made up of those who “take refuge” in the former (Ps 1:12).

B. Psalm 1: Walking with the Messiah (Kingdom Wisdom)

1. *Theme*: The psalmist contrasts the sustained satisfaction (“blessedness”) of the exemplar man with the sustained unsatisfaction of wicked people. The implicit call of the text is for readers to join the community of the righteous ones who are following God’s man-Son in pursuing a life rooted in God’s word. Only by joining themselves to this obedient royal figure will a community of righteous ones be satisfied, stay alive, and stand vindicated (cf. Pss. 19, 119).
2. *Outline*:
 - a. The sustained satisfaction of the exemplar man (1:1–3)
 - i. His life’s *pattern* (not associated with rebellion) and *pleasure* (God’s law) (1:1–2)
 - ii. His life’s *placement* (nourishing) and *produce* (plentiful and permanent) (1:3)
 - b. The sustained unsatisfaction of wicked people (1:4–6)
 - i. The basis of their dismal future (1:4)
 - ii. The nature of their dismal future (1:5–6)
 - (1) The declaration of their future punishment in the presence of the righteous ones (1:5)
 - (2) The reason for their future punishment (1:6):
 - (a) God acknowledges the way of the righteous ones (who follow the exemplar man);
 - (b) The way of the wicked will perish.
3. *Overview*:
 - a. In the pattern of biblical wisdom, the psalm distinguishes two “ways”: “the way of sinners/the wicked ones” vs. “the way of the righteous” (1:1, 6).
 - b. The “happy/blessed” man is the one “delighting” in God’s law (1:1–2), who leads the “righteous ones” in the way Yahweh “knows” (1:6); he stands distinct from but is identified with the “righteous ones” (1:5–6). The wicked and the sinners and the scoffers are not truly “happy” (1:1) because their time is short (1:4) and because they will ultimately “perish” (1:6).

- c. The wicked and the sinners and the scoffers may “stand” today (1:1), but they will not “stand” in the judgment (1:6).
- d. The man delighting in God’s law (1:2) is none other than the new “Joshua/Jesus” who succeeds in fulfilling that to which the first Joshua was called—to meditate on the law day and night and by this bring the community into the promised land (Josh 1:8). The result is that he “prosper.” As such, the kings of the earth should be “wise” (Ps 2:10; = “have good success” in Josh 1:8) and follow him. God’s “law” here is certainly represented in the Pentateuch but it likely also points forward to the ethical instruction bound up in the Psalter itself and that is identified with the perfect obedience lived out by the Christ.
 - Josh 1:8. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
- e. This man is like a tree planted by streams of water (1:3). His drawing on the life-giving streams of God’s Word makes him ever flourishing, green and yielding fruit, which means he prospers in his activities (1:3; cf. 52:8[10]; 92:12[13]). It is as if he is living in the Garden of Eden, directly linked to the presence of God.
 - Ps 52:8[10]. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.
 - Ps 92:12[13]. The righteous one flourishes like the palm tree and grows like a cedar in Lebanon. (DeRouchie’s translation)
- f. What the word is for this man (1:3), he will be for all who find refuge in him (2:12). Both Ezekiel and John drew on this imagery to describe the life-giving waters that will flow from the temple of God and his Lamb in the new creation (Ezek 47:12; Rev 21:6; 22:1–2).
 - Ezek 47:12. And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.
 - Rev 21:6. And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.
 - Rev 22:1–2. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
- g. Whereas the man devoted to God’s Word is “like a flourishing tree” (1:3), the wicked peoples are “like chaff that the wind drives away”—unrooted, lifeless, and fleeting (1:4).
- h. The one “standing” with sinners today (1:1) will be with them in the judgment tomorrow, but no longer standing (1:5).
- 4. Focus: The role of the individual “blessed man” (1:1) to guide the way of the “congregation of the righteous ones” (1:5). In light of the close link between Psalms 1–2 and the 1st person address in the mouth of the king in Ps 2:7–9, the “man” of Psalm 1 is nothing less than the hoped-for ideal king and Son of God (2:7), who is completely surrendered to God and his word (see Deut 17:18–20).
 - Deut. 17:18–20. And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

C. Psalm 2: Waiting in the Messiah (Kingdom Eschatology)

1. Theme: The psalmist calls the nations to take refuge in God's royal Son in order to enjoy satisfaction. Dependence on Yahweh's provision and protection through his king and his counsel provides the refuge and satisfaction to the righteous in all situations.
2. Outline:
 - a. The basis of the call to take refuge in God's royal Son (2:1–9)
 - i. The futility of rebellion (2:1–6)
 - ii. The certainty of submission (2:7–9)
 - b. The nature of the call to take refuge in God's royal Son (2:10–12)
 - i. The declaration of the call to take refuge (2:10–12)
 - ii. The blessed state of all who take refuge (2:12)
3. Overview and Implications:
 - a. The peoples' "plotting" against Yahweh and his anointed contrasts with the man of Psalm 1's "meditating" on God's law (same Hebrew word). Furthermore, while lexically not identical, the imagery of "taking counsel" against Yahweh and his Anointed One in 2:2 parallels the imagery of the wicked man's "counsel" in 1:1. To follow wicked counselors is to stand against Yahweh and his Christ, which will only result in ruin.
 - b. As will be seen, the portrait of the king in Psalm 2 and in the later royal psalms far exceeds anything experienced or enjoyed by any OT king. One misses the point if he reads Psalm 2 typologically—as first referring to the original David whose life points to the future Messiah. The original David fled from kings but not all the nations of the world. He was never designated God's "begotten Son," nor did he ever receive the nations as his inheritance. He did not execute global judgment, nor did he establish global peace. He was not a refuge for the righteous ones. Christ Jesus alone secures such realities.
 - c. As such, it should not be strange that Peter read the raging of the nations and peoples against Yahweh and his Christ in Psalm 2 as predicting the execution of Jesus by Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jews (Acts 4:24–27). Earlier Peter had already emphasized the guilt of the Jews in Jesus' crucifixion (2:22–23), so Psalm 2 identifies God's children as those finding refuge in his Christ and *not* those linked biologically to Abraham.
 - Acts 4:24–27. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."
 - Acts 2:22–23. "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
 - d. In 2 Sam 7:14, God had already promised David that his future offspring would be God's "Son," and we see this asserted both at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Matt 3:17; 17:5). Nevertheless, only in his resurrection does he become the "begotten" Son (Ps 1:2; Acts 13:32–33) or "Son of God in power" (Rom 1:4). That is, at Christ's resurrection he moved from hoped-for Messiah to reigning Messiah (Matt 28:18; Acts 2:32–36; Phil 2:8–9), and those who find refuge in

- him, walking in the path he sets, will themselves be called sons of God (Rev 21:6–7).
- i. 2 Sam 7:14. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.
 - ii. Matt 3:17. and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
 - iii. Matt 17:5. He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”
 - iv. Acts 13:32–33. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”
 - v. Rom 1:4. And [he] was declared to be *the Son of God in power* according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - vi. Matt 28:18. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 - vii. Acts 2:32–36. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that *God has made him both Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom you crucified.”
 - viii. Phil 2:8–9. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.
 - ix. Rev 21:6–7. And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and *I will be his God and he will be my son*.”
- e. Yahweh promises his royal Son, “You shall break them with a rod of iron” (Ps 2:9). The messianic prophecies in Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; and 2 Sam 23:7 all anticipate this prediction. Yahweh’s king deserves global allegiance from all because upon his resurrection from the dead he will inherit the nations and overcome all God-hostility (Ps 2:8–9). John saw this reality ultimately fulfilled in the work of Christ at his second coming (Rev 12:5; 19:15) and then of all following him (2:26–27). Kings of the earth should therefore be warned (2:10).
- i. Gen 49:10. The *scepter* shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
 - ii. Num 24:17. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a *scepter* shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.
 - iii. 2 Sam 23:7. but the man who touches them arms himself with *iron* and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.
 - iv. Rev 12:5. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations *with a rod of iron*, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.
 - v. Rev 19:15. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them *with a rod of iron*. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.
 - vi. Rev 2:25–28. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star.
- f. The royal Son of Psalm 2 is the “man” of Psalm 1 who is grounded in God’s word. He is also, however, the giver of the law, for his warning in 2:10 is counsel that should be heeded—unlike the counsel of the wicked in 1:1. The king’s charge,

therefore, is equated here with Yahweh's law in 1:2, so heeding God's word is the same as following the voice of the king, who himself is a man of the word. Kissing the Son and finding refuge in him is manifest in a life surrendered to God through his word, for the Son embodies the life of law.

- g. Because the only explicit commands to the broader audience in Pss 1–2 relate to finding refuge in the Son (Ps 2:10–12), the clearest way we do this is through submitting to God's word, which is what guides the king (Deut 17:18–20, see above).
4. Focus: Calling the world to join the community of the righteous by surrendering to God's royal Son, who will secure his triumph only by enduring the rage and violence of the nations.

D. Conclusion:

1. The anticipated royal son of Yahweh and greater David is the ultimate righteous one whose way is secure in God (1:6) because he is satisfied, saturated, and fruitful in Yahweh's word (1:1–3). He stands as the earthly expression of God's rule, and in him alone will the nations find refuge (Ps 2).
2. Those happy in God are: (1) those who take refuge in God through his Christ (2:12) and (2) those who follow in the way of the Messiah, delighting in, meditating on, and walking in Yahweh's Law (1:1–2).
3. Worship is dependence on Yahweh by following his Law and seeking refuge through his King in all circumstances.

E. Excursus: The “Blessed/Happy/Satisfied” Life in the Psalms

In the Psalms we regularly hear of the satisfied/blessed life. Psalms 1–2 set us up for this by the literary device *inclusio*, which frames the whole: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked . . .” and “Blessed are all who take refuge in him [i.e., the royal Son of God].” Here is a list of all that is declared “happy/blessed/satisfied” in the Psalter:

1. Blessed are those whose inward disposition is directed toward Yahweh and whose outward actions align with his ways.
 - The man whose life's delight is in Yahweh's law and not in the counsel of the wicked (1:1)
 - The man in whom is no deceit (32:2)
 - The people who know how to celebrate God with the community and to walk in the light of Yahweh's face (89:15)
 - Those who observe justice and do righteousness (106:3)
 - The man who fears Yahweh and delights in his commands (112:1; cf. 128:1)
 - Those whose way is blameless and walk in way of Yahweh (119:1; cf. 128:1)
 - Those who keep his testimonies and seek him with their whole heart (119:2)
 - Everyone who fears Yahweh and walks in his ways (128:1–2; cf. 112:1; 119:1)
 - The one who considers the poor (41:1)
2. Blessed are those who are dependent on Yahweh, looking to him for help.
 - Those who take refuge in God's royal son (2:12; cf. 34:8)
 - The man who takes refuge in Yahweh (34:8; cf. 2:12)
 - The man who trusts Yahweh and not created things (40:4; cf. 84:12)
 - Those whose strength is in Yahweh and whose inclination is toward him (84:5)
 - The one who trusts in Yahweh (84:12; cf. 40:4)
 - The one whose help is the God of Jacob and whose hope is Yahweh his God (146:5)
3. Blessed are those who experience Yahweh's favor, presence, discipline, justice, or covenant blessings—who stand elect and forgiven.

- The one whose sin is forgiven and against whom God counts no iniquity (32:1, 2)
- The nation whose God is Yahweh—namely, those chosen as his heritage (33:12; cf. 65:4; 144:15)
- The one chosen of God to dwell in his presence (65:4; cf. 33:12)
- Those who dwell in Yahweh's house, singing his praise forever (84:4)
- The man who is disciplined and taught the law by Yahweh (94:12)
- The man who has many children (127:5)
- The one who repays Babylon for their wickedness against God's people (137:8–9)
- The people to whom covenant blessings come (144:15)
- The people whose God is Yahweh (144:15; cf. 33:12)

V. The Messianic Conclusion: Psalms 146–150—Yahweh's sovereignty is to be praised because of his Anointed One.

- A. Ps 146:** Yahweh is the great Creator of all who keeps the downtrodden.
- B. Ps 147:** Yahweh is the great Architect, Overseer, and Provider of the universe who takes special pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.
- C. Ps 148:** Yahweh is the Supreme One who is worthy of praise in all creation because of his saving work through his messianic king (148:14; cf. 1 Sam 2:10; Luke 1:69).
- D. Ps 149:** Yahweh is the great King who saved a humble people for his pleasure and their joy and shape an army that will execute his vengeance on the nations (cf. Ps 2:9; Rev 2:26–27).
- E. Ps 150:** Yahweh is God over all whose actions and person are worthy of praise from all that has breath.

VI. Approaching the Psalms through Genre

- A. History of Interpretation:** It has long been recognized that the psalmists used various literary forms as templates for communicating with God.
 - Hermann Gunkel** (with J. Begrich), *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (1998; orig. German 1933): The first to classify a number of psalms and to posit a particular life setting (usually the cult) for each type of psalm. Among his disciples are H. Gressmann, H. Schmidt, J. Begrich, J. Hempel. While the concept of a single life setting behind each psalm type is no longer sustainable today, his form-critical categories (though now revised and augmented) continue to frame the discussion.
 - Clause Westermann**, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (1981): Argues that all psalms are “praises” to various degrees. He argues that Hebrew had no separate word for “to thank”—the word normally used in contexts where this is expected is “to bless”—and that the Hebrew *tôdâ* should be translated “praise” rather than “thanksgiving.” The normal distinction between psalms of praise and psalms of thanksgiving is thus misguided. We have instead “psalms of descriptive praise,” where the praises of God describe his attributes in general, universal terms, and “psalms of narrative or declarative praise,” where God's praises are recited in the form of specifics of what God has done for the nation or the individual. “Psalms of lament” are also viewed as psalms of praise given in the midst of a trial, in so far as they move toward praise in their concluding vows to trust.
 - Erhard S. Gerstenberger**, *Psalms, Part I* (1988): While following Gunkel's classifications, attention is focused on the social settings of the psalms with particular attention to “in-group and out-group dynamics.” He argues that many psalms arose in the context of “the small, organic group of family, neighborhood, or community” (the

out-groups), not in “the central temple or famous wisdom academics” (the in-groups). Contra Gunkel, then, many of the psalms were not liturgical or connected with the cult at all.

4. **Walter Brueggemann**, “Psalms and the Life of Faith,” in *The Message of the Psalms* (1984): Re-categorizes the psalm according to function. Building off the work of Paul Ricoeur, he posits three categories: (1) *psalms of orientation*: those characterized by the absence of tension, in which the world is ordered and goodness prevails (e.g., psalms of creation, wisdom, retribution, and blessing); (2) *psalms of disorientation*: psalms of lament; and (3) *psalms of reorientation*: those evidencing that the psalmist has gone through disorientation and now has progressed to a new place of orientation, which is more secure and mature than the original orientation (e.g., praise hymns and thanksgiving psalms [i.e., Westermann’s psalms of descriptive and declarative praise]).
5. Also in this category, at a more popular level are Bernard W. Anderson’s *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak to Us Today* (3rd ed., 2000) and D. Stuart’s section on Psalms in *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth* (3rd ed., 2003).

B. Basic Psalm (Poem) Types. Scholars classify ##1, 3–4 by structure and the rest by content.

1. *Lament Psalms* (APTRAP: Address > Petition > Trouble > Rationale > Assurance > Praise)—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”: Most numerous group of the Psalms; some sixty Psalms in this category. Both individual and corporate, and they dominate the front part of the Psalter.
2. *Trust Psalms* (subset of Lament)—“Yahweh is my Shepherd; I shall not want”: characterized by the expansion of the “announcement of trust” section of laments.
3. *Thanksgiving Psalms* (IMART: Introduction > Misery > Appeal > Rescue > Testimony)—“I love Yahweh, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy”: Typically recounting one or more of the saving acts of God. Some 16 Psalms in this category.
4. *Praise Psalms / Hymns* (SRS: Summons to praise > Reason > Summons repeated)—“Praise Yahweh, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name”: Declarative and descriptive praise, typically focusing upon who God is with regard to his attributes and relationship to Israel. Among these are also the Enthronement Psalms (Characterized by content and not structure; the subject is typically a description of Yahweh’s appearing before his people; key words: throne, reign, enthronement) and Zion Psalms (Characterized by content, not structure; characterized by a longing for Jerusalem and God’s presence).
5. *Royal Psalms*: Characterized by thanking God for the king or things about the king. Almost all Royal Psalms are messianic.
6. *Wisdom/Torah Psalms* (x/y): The ability to make right choices (“Will you choose this or this?”) in accordance with God’s law (*torah*)
7. *Historical Psalms*. Focus upon the review of the history of God’s saving works among his people, especially his deliverance of them from the bondage of Egypt and his creation of them as a people.

Fig. 18.3. Psalms by Genre Category

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
Lament	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 (= 53), 17, 22, 26, 27, 28, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42/43, 44, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 74, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 90, 94, 102, 106, 108, 109, 120, 123, 126, 130, 137, 140, 141, 142, 143 (Penitential Psalms = 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143; Imprecatory Psalms = 35, 55, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137)
Trust	11, 16, 23, 91, 121, 125, 129, 131
Thanksgiving	30, 66, 92, 107, 116, 118, 124, 138
Praise	8, 29, 33, 46, 47, 48, 76, 84, 87, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 111, 113, 114, 117, 122, 134, 135, 136, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150 (Songs of Zion = 46, 48, 76, 84, 87; Enthronement of Yahweh Psalms = 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99)
Royal	2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144
Wisdom/Torah	1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128
Liturgy	15, 24 (cf. also 136)
Historical	78 (cf. also 105, 106, 107, 114)
Mixed	9/10, 19, 25, 31, 32, 34, 36, 40, 65, 89, 119
Unclear	50, 52, 62, 67, 68, 75, 81, 115, 133, 139

Prepared by John C. Crutchfield; found in DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, 342.

C. Overview of Lament, Trust, Thanksgiving, and Praise Psalms (adapted from Crutchfield, “Psalms,” in DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, 339–41, and DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 69–75)³

1. Synthesis:
 - a. Lament: cry for help amidst trial >
 - b. Trust: expression of hope amidst trial >
 - c. Thanksgiving: gratitude for deliverance >
 - d. Praise: celebration for who God is and what he has done
2. Psalms of Lament
 - a. Structure (APTRAP):
 - i. Address to God
 - ii. Petitions, usually for being heard
 - iii. Trouble described
 - iv. Reason why God should answer
 - v. Assurance declared (confidence or trust)
 - vi. Praise or promise of sacrifice

Psalms	Elements of Lament
¹ O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger....	Address to God
² Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.	Petitions and Reasons
⁴ Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love.	Petition and Reason
⁶ I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears.... ⁷ My eye ... grows weak because of all my foes.	Trouble described
⁹ The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. ¹⁰ All my enemies shall be ashamed....	Assurance declared

NOTE: The missing element here is “Praise or promise of sacrifice,” but this element can be easily seen at the end of the lament in Psalm 3:8.

³ For “Royal Psalms,” see the discussion below of the Psalter’s Depiction of Christ.

- b. Examples of NT usage:
- Matt 27:46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Cf. Ps 22:1[2].)
 - Matt 7:23. And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” (Cf. Ps 6:8[9].)
 - John 2:17. His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (Cf. Ps 69:9[10].)
 - John 12:27. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour”? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. (Cf. John Ps 6:3–4[4–5].)
 - John 15:25. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: “They hated me without a cause.” (Cf. Ps 35:19.)
 - Rom 15:3–4. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Cf. Ps 69:9[10].) **NOTE:** This latter text highlights how the prayers of the Christ becomes the songs of the saved. Those who suffer with Christ can now pray the prayers of the Christ.
3. Psalms of Trust
- a. Laments focus on the problem, whereas psalms of trust focus on the answer, but both are cries from the midst of pain. Psalms of trust like Psalm 23 express confidence in God’s provision and protection.

Psalm 23	
¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.	<i>Certainty and rest in God’s provision</i>
⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.	<i>Certainty and rest in God’s protection</i>
Psalm 62	
¹ For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. ² He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.	<i>Confidence in God’s goodness, provision, and protection</i>
³ How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? ⁴ They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. <i>Selah</i>	<i>The reality of opposition from outside</i>
⁵ For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.	<i>Confidence in God’s goodness, provision, and protection</i>

- b. Examples of NT usage:
- Luke 23:46. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. (Cf. Ps 31:5[6].)
 - Acts 2:25–32. For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” ²⁹ Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had

- sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. (Cf. Ps 16:8–11[LXX 15].)
- iii. Acts 13:35–37. Therefore he says also in another psalm, “You will not let your Holy One see corruption.”³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. (Cf. Ps 16:8–11[LXX 15].)

4. Psalms of Thanksgiving (IMART)

- a. Structure (IMART):
- i. Introduction of praise, addressed to God
 - ii. Misery or trouble reported
 - iii. Appeal for others to praise God
 - iv. Rescue announced
 - v. Testimony of vow or praise

Psalm 30	Elements of Thanksgiving
¹ I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.	Introduction of praise, addressed to God
⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.	Misery reported
¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.	Appeal for others to praise God
O LORD, I will give thanks to you forever!	Rescue announced
	Testimony of vow or praise

b. Examples of NT usage:

- i. Matt 21:9. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Cf. Ps 118:25–26.)
- ii. Matt 21:42–44. Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” (Ps. 118:22–23.)
- iii. Matt 23:39. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Cf. Ps 118:25–26.)
- iv. John 19:36. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” (Cf. Ps 34:20[21].)
- v. Heb 13:6. So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Cf. Ps 118:6.)
- vi. 1 Pet 2:2–3. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (Cf. Ps 34:8[9].)
- vii. 1 Pet 2:4–8. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁶ For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a

rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (Cf. Ps 118:22–23.)

- viii. 1 Pet 3:9–12. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (Cf. Ps 34:12–16[13–17].)

5. Psalms of Praise

a. Structure (SRS):

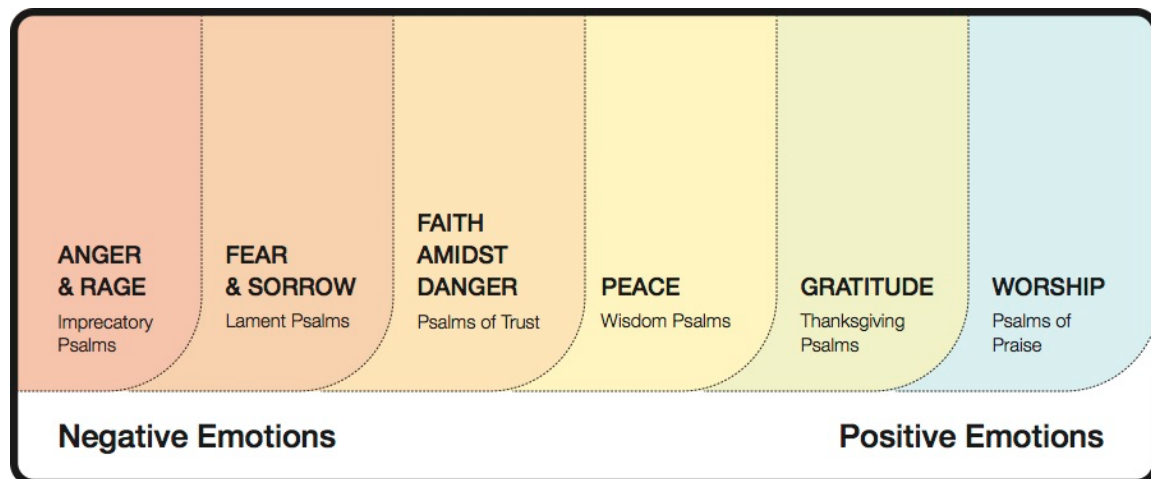
- i. Summons to praise
- ii. Reason for praise
- iii. Summons to praise repeated

Psalm 117	Elements of Praise
¹ Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!	Summons to praise
² For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.	Reason for praise
Praise the LORD!	Summons to praise repeated

b. Examples of NT usage:

- i. Matt 21:16. And they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, “‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise’?” (Cf. Ps 8:2[3].)
- ii. John 6:31–33. Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” ³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (Cf. Ps 105:40.)
- iii. Eph 1:22. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. (Cf. Ps 8:4–6[5–7] with 1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:6–8.)
- iv. Acts 4:24. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.” (Cf. Ps 146:6.)
- v. Heb 3:7–11. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” (Cf. Ps 95:7–11.)
- vi. Heb 4:3, 5–10. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. . . . ⁵ And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.” ⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (Cf. Ps 95:7–11)

D. Interpreting Emotion in the Various Psalm Genres



1. Rage in the Psalms of Imprecation⁴
 - a. At times in the Psalms (and elsewhere in the Bible—e.g. Num. 16:15; Jer. 18:23; Neh. 4:4–5; 13:29; 1 Chr. 12:17; 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8–9; 5:12), the psalmists declare or pray for a curse on enemies. Can Christians speak this way and still love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and do good to those who hate us (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35)?
 - Ps 35:4. Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life!
 - Ps 55:15[16]. Let death steal over them.
 - Ps 69:23[24]. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.
 - Ps 69:27[28]. Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.
 - Ps 137:8–9. O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!
 - Ps 139:19–22. Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Yahweh? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.
 - See Pss 5:10[11]; 10:15; 28:4; 31:17–18[18–19]; 35:4–6; 40:14–15[15–16]; 55:15[16]; 69:22–28[23–29]; 109:6–15; 137:8–9; 139:19–22; 140:9–10[10–11].
 - b. Things to remember:
 - i. The OT prophets, Jesus, and Paul never hesitated to declare curses over the enemies of God (Jer 18:19–23; Matt 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8–9). In doing so, they were responding to real wrong and injustice. The psalmists' imprecations arise out of the same context and often come only after sustained acts of love have been rejected.
 - Ps 35:12–13. But I, when they were sick—I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest. I went about as though I grieved for my friend or brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning.
 - Ps 109:4–5. In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer. So they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

⁴ Some of these points are adapted from John Crutchfield, "Psalms," in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, 343–44; John Piper, "Do I Not Hate Those Who Hate You, O Lord? The Verses We Skipped," *Taste and See*, Oct 3, 2000.

- ii. The hatred of the psalmists often seems related more with moral repugnance and less with personal vindication, and often the psalmist is explicitly concerned with God's right to worship.
 - Ps 139:19–22. Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! ²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. ²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O Yahweh? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? ²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.
- iii. Sometimes the psalmist requests that God punish his enemies *so that* their hearts may be turned toward him.
 - Ps 83:16–18. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD. ¹⁷ Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, ¹⁸ that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.
- iv. Remember that these emotions are expressed in prayer, not in a call to arms or to an angry mob. Nevertheless, these prayers were often communally sung, suggesting that there are indeed times for public denouncement. Hardness and rebellion can extend so far that sin becomes beyond forgiveness (Matt 12:32), should not be prayed for (1 John 5:16), and demands the calling down of a curse, even in public (1 Cor 16:22).
 - 1 Cor 16:22. If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.
- v. Psalm 69 is an imprecatory psalm that guided Jesus' own perspective on his ministry. Jesus holds the right to pronounce and bring judgment on his enemies.
 - Ps 69:4, 9, 21–24, 27[5, 10, 22–25, 28]. More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.... ⁹ For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.... ²¹ They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. ²² Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. ²³ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. ²⁴ Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.... ²⁷ Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.
 - John 15:25. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: "They hated me without a cause." (Ps 69:4[5])
 - John 2:17. His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (Ps 69:9[10])
 - Matt. 27:34. They offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. (Ps 69:21[22])
- c. Should Christian's use imprecatory psalms today?
 - i. Introductory comments:
 - (1) Job declared that he had not "rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him" (Job 31:29). He then adds, "I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse" (31:30). At first glance, this would suggest that verbal curses are sinful.
 - (2) James says something similar: "No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so" (Jas 3:8–10).
 - (3) On the flip side, in Rom 11:9–10, Paul treats Ps 69:22–23[24–25] as having Scriptural authority and as having fulfillment in the redemptive-

historical hardening of Israel. This suggests that the imprecatory psalms are not by themselves sinful.

- Rom 11:9–10. And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.”
- (4) Paul cites Ps 69:9 in Rom 15:3, identifying the psalmist’s words as the words of Christ, who never sinned (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5) and was right to pronounce and bring judgment on his enemies. Paul then emphasizes the lasting relevance of *all* OT Scripture for Christians (Rom 15:4).
- Rom 15:2–4. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- (5) With this and points like those mentioned above in mind, Pastor John Piper has asserted that Christians would do best to leave imprecations to the Messiah (“Do I Not Hate Those Who Hate You, O Lord? The Verses We Skipped,” *Taste and See*, Oct 3, 2000): “We will grant to the psalmist (usually David), who speaks, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the foreshadowed Messiah and Judge, the right to call down judgment on the enemies of God. This is not personal vindictiveness. It is a prophetic execution of what will happen at the last day when God casts all his enemies into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). We would do well to leave such final assessments to God, and realize our own corrupt inability to hate as we ought. While there is unforgivable sin for which we are not to pray, we are told to love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us, and return good for evil (as David did). This is our vocation by faith. Let us tremble and trust God, lest we fail, and find ourselves on the other side of the curse.”
- (6) While I affirm with Pastor John that Christians must be cautious in their use of imprecations, it seems to beg the question to say that only inspired authors can speak this way.
- ii. While the psalmists voices often anticipate the voice of the Messiah, the imprecatory psalms themselves are tools for God’s people when they follow the Christ on the path of suffering. The statement in Psalm 137:8–9 is explicitly made against Babylon, whose unjust atrocities were noteworthy: “O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!” This is righteous anger against real evil, and the prayer is for God’s justice. I suggest the voice of Jesus in imprecation is the voice of his human side, by which he can “sympathize with our weakness, ... yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Not only the psalmists, but Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Paul all call for God’s curse to be brought on individuals, suggesting that, while not an every-day occurrence, believers in general can be placed in situations where imprecations are called for.
- iii. With this, directly after Paul’s citation of Ps 69:9 in Rom 15:3, he asserts that all Scripture was given (1) to give us encouragement and to recreate enduring in hope in a God who will judge our enemies and (2) to make us better lovers

of one another (Rom 15:4–6). The cross proves that God takes sin seriously, and therefore we can rest confident that God will judge sin and our enemies. This gives us encouragement and hope.

- Rom 15:3–6. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul says elsewhere, trusting God to bring justice tomorrow enables us to love our enemies today.

- Rom 12:18–19. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”
- iv. The disciplinary step of ex-communication in 1 Corinthians 5 is noteworthy in this regard, for here Paul says the church should “deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, *so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 5:5). This disposition aligns with the sentiments of the psalmist in Psalm 83, when he prays that God would either humble his enemies through changing their hearts or destroying them: “Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O Yahweh. Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, that they may know that you alone, whose name is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth.”
 - v. Just as God is able to be wrathful and loving at the same time (John 3:16, 36), it seems Christians too must be able with the grace of God to maintain righteous anger in the context of love. I suggest that this is the context for imprecations, and that they still have their place in the church today.
 - vi. John N. Day came to a similar conclusion in his article, “The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics,” *BibSac* 159 (2002): 166–86. Here he argues (1) that the background of imprecations is the promise of divine vengeance in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1–43), the principle of divine justice outlined in the law of retaliation (Exod. 21:23–24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21), and the assurance of divine cursing as well as blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:2–3) and (2) that the theology of imprecation is carried unchanged through the Scripture to the end of the OT (Rev. 15:2–4; 18:20).
2. Internal dialogue in the Psalms
 - a. *Self-talk in lament*. Ps 13:2. How long must I take counsel in my soul?
 - b. *Self-talk in lament*. Ps 42:5–6. Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation⁶ and my God.
 - c. *Self-talk in thanksgiving*. Ps 116:7. Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
 - d. *Self-talk in praise*. Ps 103:1–2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.... Now this man’s treatment [in Ps 42:5, 11] was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts to talking to himself. ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul?’ he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: ‘Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.’”

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

E. Evaluation of Genre Analysis:

1. Benefits:
 - a. Genre study has effectively identified common patterns that exist between similar types of psalms. Knowing the patterns can help us have proper expectations and can also signal important departures from the norm.
 - b. Genre analysis clarifies which psalms are best used in the changing worship contexts within the community of faith. In the midst of our pain, we can immediately find the psalms of lament or trust. To give words to our gratitude, we can go to the psalms of thanksgiving. To adore our reigning King, we can find the psalms of praise.
2. Cautions:
 - a. Genre analysis tends to isolate the psalms from one another, losing any sense of canonical continuity within the Psalter as a whole. In our discussion of literary context, I’ll note how, like our modern-day hymnals, the Psalms witnesses an intentionality in its structure, and this can be missed if we treat each psalm only as an independent witness to a new genre.
 - b. Some psalms don’t fit single genre categories but appear to be more fluid mixtures of different genres. Heart-felt words to God so often combine praise and petition, thanksgiving and plea, that we must be careful not to force a given psalm into a preconceived mold. A case in point is Psalm 40, which opens like a typical Psalm of Thanksgiving (vv. 1–10) but suddenly shifts to Lament in verse 11 (vv. 11–17). We cannot treat Psalm 40 strictly as a Thanksgiving Psalm or a Lament Psalm.
 - c. House (*Old Testament Theology*, 404) adds that genre analysis often rejects the validity of psalm titles and historical statements in the psalms, which cuts the psalms themselves off from any historical bearing.
 - d. In 1 Chr 16:4, we are told that David appointed Levitical ministers (1) to take care of the ark of Yahweh and (2) *to perform acts that cause remembrance, thanks, and praise to Yahweh, the God of Israel* (cf. Neh 12:8, 24, 27, 31, 38, 43). Perhaps having 10 or more genre categories for the psalms goes beyond the intent of the biblical writers. We could limit the whole to the three categories of psalms of memorial, psalms of thanks, and psalms of praise, recognizing that at times these overlap.

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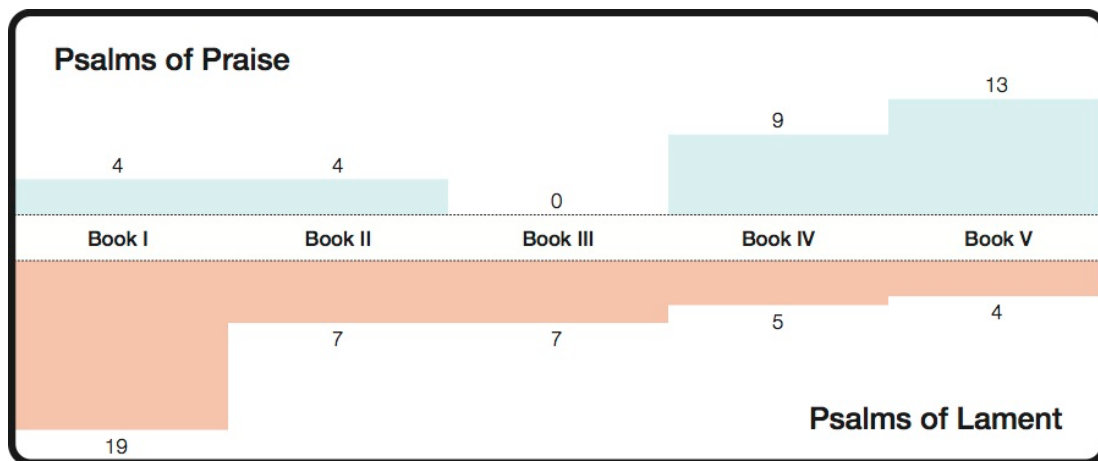
VII. The Canonical Approach

A. General Features That All Interpreters Affirm

1. The Five "Books" (mirroring the Pentateuch) each with a concluding doxology:
 - a. Book 1: Pss. 1–41, doxology Ps. 41:13
 - b. Book 2: Pss. 42–72, doxology Ps. 72:18–19
 - c. Book 3: Pss. 73–89, doxology Ps. 89:52
 - d. Book 4: Pss. 90–106, doxology Ps. 106:48
 - e. Book 5: Pss. 107–150, doxology Pss. 146–150
2. The Psalms do witness intentional groupings.
 - a. Grouping due to attribution:
 - i. Book 1 is almost fully attributed to David, and most of Book 2 is as well; the final statement in 72:20 about the prayers of David being ended suggests that Books 1–2 may have been the first psalter. In the course of canonization, however, non-Davidic psalms were inserted into this group and other Davidic psalms were added later (e.g., Pss. 138–145).
 - ii. Psalms attributed to the "sons of Korah" (Pss. 42–49) who served in the musical service of the temple.
 - iii. Psalms attributed to Asaph (Pss. 50, 73–83), who served the Lord with music abilities during the time of David (1 Chr. 15:17; 25:1–9).
 - b. Groupings due to content, catchword-theme, or cultic function:
 - i. Pss. 42–83 (Book 2 + Songs of Asaph), often called the "Elohistic Psalter," show a much higher frequency of *Elohim* over *Yahweh*, in contrast to the rest of Psalms. Intriguingly, Ps 45:6[7] tags the anointed king "God," which invites the interpreter to read other occurrences of *Elohim* as a joint reference to *Yahweh* and his God-man king.

- (1) Features:
 - (a) Pss. 1–41; 84–150:
 - (i) Yahweh (650x); Elohim (120x)
 - (ii) Yahweh in a-line; Elohim in b-line
 - (b) Pss 42–83:
 - (i) Yahweh (45x); Elohim (245x)
 - (ii) Elohim in a-line; Yahweh in b-line
- (2) Explanations:
 - (a) All or part of this may have been a distinct collection that shows intentional editorial shaping and a preference for Elohim over Yahweh.
 - (b) Some suggest this unit is part of the chronological development of the divisions mirrors the increasing avoidance of God's name, but this is questionable.
- ii. Pss. 93–100 (“Yahweh reigns” 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1)
- iii. Pss. 111–118 (“Hallelujah”)
- iv. Pss. 120–134: The “Songs of Ascent”, most likely pilgrimage psalms.
- v. Pss. 146–150 (“Hallelujah”)
- vi. Other samples of possible catchword-thematic arrangement: Pss. 23–24; 94–95
- c. While Lament Psalms outnumber any other psalm genre, there is a noticeable shift from a predominance of laments at the beginning to a predominance of Psalms of Praise / Hymns at the end.

Fig. 18.4. Movement from Lament to Praise in the Psalter



Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie and John C. Crutchfield; adapted from C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 125, 139.

3. Synthesis and Prospect:

- a. Tremper Longman III asserts that the features like those noted above are all one can say regarding the canonical shape of the Psalter (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 255):
 - i. Regarding the division of the whole into five books, he states: “It is impossible to determine why the books were divided where they were. Certain psalms are grouped together on the basis of similarity in authorship,

content, or function. Nonetheless, these groups are occasional, and no overall structure to the book may be observed.”

- ii. With this conclusion, he further asserts: “Most psalms do not have a normal literary context. Except under rare circumstances, it is inappropriate to exegete a psalm in the literary context of the psalms that precede and follow it.” He also affirms the need to focus on genre analysis, noting, “*The primary literary context for the study of a psalm ... is not the psalms that border it, but the psalms that are generically similar to it.*”
- b. In response to Longman, a number of points are noteworthy:
 - i. Longman identifies the intentional placement of Psalm 1 as introductory, and he also recognizes an apparent intentionality in the placement of more Praise Psalms (Hymns) at the end of the Psalter. He nevertheless still concludes that “no overall organizational structure of the book may be observed” and that “it is impossible to determine why the books were divided where they were” (*Old Testament Introduction*, 255).
 - ii. Longman’s affirmation of intentionality in the structure of the whole begs the question whether he has been too quick to single out genre analysis as the only way to approach the Psalter. Many contemporary scholars have provided provocative theses that indeed the entire Psalter shows intentional structuring and that individual psalms must be read within their canonical placement within their given books.

B. Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985) (cf. *Psalms 1* [NIVAC, Zondervan, 2002])

1. Overview of the approach: The Psalter is focused on the Davidic covenant, as is highlighted by most “seam” psalms, which help shape the message of the whole.
 - a. *Book 1*: Psalm 2 at the front of Book 1 alludes to 2 Samuel 7 and points to the announcement of the Davidic covenant; Psalm 41 at the end provides a statement of confidence in the Davidic covenant.
 - b. *Book 2*: The final Psalm 72 is an enthronement psalm of Solomon and portrays the covenant promises passed on from David to his son.
 - c. *Book 3*: The concluding Psalm 89 speaks of the failure of the Davidic covenant.
 - d. *Book 4* as a whole provides answer to the dilemma of a failed covenant wherein Yahweh is portrayed as king and a refuge to his people. Yahweh, not the earthly king, is central to Israel’s existence.
 - e. *Book 5* is an answer to the pleas for help from exiles and exalts Yahweh over all.
2. Initial Evaluation:
 - a. Wilson’s proposed “narrative” uses only selective psalms to support his theory.
 - b. He does not discuss all the “seam” psalms.
 - c. There are solid reasons to question his view that Yahweh’s kingship replaces the hopes of the Davidic covenant. I suggest that the end of the Psalter finds both Yahweh and his anointed reigning side-by-side just as Psalm 2 portrays.

C. John Walton, “Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 21–31; *The Old Testament Today* (2004), 355–361.

1. Overview of the approach:
 - a. Builds off the work of Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985).
 - b. Psalms 1–2 introduce the book, Psalms 146–150 conclude the book, and the superscriptions group specific psalms together for specific purpose.

- c. Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106 are seam psalms, each with a concluding doxology of Yahweh. The “seams” advance the themes of the introduction through the book and provide the lens for reading each “book.”
 - d. The psalms were editorially arranged to reflect on the history of the Davidic covenant—much like songs in a cantata.
2. Summary of the “content agenda”:
- a. *Introduction* (Pss. 1–2)
 - i. Ps. 1: Ultimate vindication of the righteous
 - ii. Ps. 2: God’s choice and defense of Israelite king
 - b. *Book 1*: David’s conflict with Saul (Pss. 3–41)
 - c. *Book 2*: David’s kingship (Pss. 42–72)
 - d. *Book 3*: Eighth century Assyrian crisis (Pss. 73–89)
 - e. *Book 4*: Introspection about destruction of the temple and exile (Pss. 90–106)
 - f. *Book 5*: Praise/reflection on return from exile and beginning a new era (Pss. 107–145)
 - g. *Conclusion* (Pss. 146–150): Climactic praise to God
3. Support for this proposal:
- a. Book 1: David’s conflict with Saul (Pss. 3–41)
 - i. *Seam*: Psalm 41 provides an application of Psalm 1 in David’s conflict with Saul, capturing the psalmist’s faith in the midst of confusion and the unresolved nature of his circumstances.
 - ii. *Support*: Psalms 3–40 show a significant emphasis on the theme of trouble at the hands of enemies; the Book is full of cries for protection and guidance and affirmations of God’s strength and ability to deliver.
 - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: Saul is not the only “enemy” in Book 1. Indeed, Psalm 3, the first attributed psalm, the superscript assumes David is already on the throne, running from Absalom. I wonder if a more general category of “kingdom in crisis” fits this section. Furthermore, Walton simply assumes that the body of the psalms provide *first* the prayers of the earthly Israelite king *for himself* rather than predictively of the Christ.
 - b. Book 2: David’s kingship (Pss. 42–72)
 - i. *Seam*: Psalm 72, a psalm of Solomon, is a blessing on the king, wishing for him the very assurance Psalm 2 offered. The final comment that the prayers of David are ended may suggest Books 1–2 are designed to express two stages in David’s life (Book 1: David’s life in exile as enemy of Saul; Book 2: David’s reign on the throne of Israel).
 - ii. *Support*: Psalms 42–71 has a high number of psalms that appear to be devoted directly to events of David’s reign: David came to the throne with the nation in chaos, which may be pointed to in the national lament of Psalm 44. Psalm 45 indicates a secure throne, and Psalms 46–47 may be hymns commemorating David’s victories. Psalm 48 focuses on Jerusalem, David’s new capital, and Psalm 51 provides penitential reflection on David’s sin with Bathsheba. Psalm 53 repeats Psalm 14, suggesting a return to the “enemies” motif and perhaps reflecting Absalom’s hostilities against David.
 - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: We could read Book 2 as a testament of David’s rise and enthronement that grows out of suffering. However, we can also read it as predictive of Christ’s triumph out of suffering, and both the OT prophets and NT read this section this way. It is noteworthy that the portrait of the king in Psalm 72 far exceeds either David or Solomon. Following the elevated vision

of the messianic king in Psalm 72, the ESV has, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are *ended*” (Ps 72:20), but I think a better reading is “fulfilled.” That is, Ps 72 identifies the realization of king David’s hopes—i.e., the eschatological Anointed One, whose kingdom will be both eternal and universal.

- c. Book 3: Eighth century Assyrian crisis (Pss. 73–89)
 - i. *Seam*: Psalm 89 recounts the Davidic covenant in the context of crisis, suggesting that Book 3 reflects on a period of jeopardy to the covenant and monarchy (whether the division of the kingdom, threat of Assyrians, or destruction by the Babylonians).
 - ii. *Support*: Psalms 73–88 takes a distinctly corporate turn, reflecting on the national struggles of Israel and God’s preeminence over the nations. Psalm 79 speaks of invasion and defilement of the temple; Psalm 80 seeks restoration; and Psalm 84 finds security and comfort in the temple.
 - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: There is only one Davidic psalm in this unit—a lament (Ps 86), and there are no psalms of praise (on certain counts, but see the “Songs of Zion” in Pss 76, 84, 87). This could suggest we should see Book 3 as focusing on the division, rebellion, and separation from the Davidic ideal. However, to focus only on the Assyrian crisis in the title seems too restricted. Furthermore, recently many scholars have identified not only how Ps 89 addresses the failure of the Davidic covenant but also emphasizes its hope.
- d. Book 4: Introspection about destruction of the temple and exile (Pss. 90–106)
 - i. *Seam*: Psalm 106 is a retrospective look at Israel’s history, with a focus on Israel’s failures and God’s grace; it ends with a petition for re-gathering from the nations and therefore may be read as offering thoughts from exile.
 - ii. *Support*: Psalm 90 opens with a psalm of Moses stressing Yahweh as the ultimate dwelling place of Israel. Psalms 90–105 note God’s anger and call on him to relent; they look to God to bring vengeance and forgiveness.
 - iii. *Initial Evaluation*: Following the rebellion of Book 3, Book 4 does appear to witness a refocusing of the people of God back toward faithfulness and realized need. It provides the foundation for the celebration of redemption seen in Book 5. Again, the sense of exile and need for Davidic covenant fulfillment fits well a period without a king on the throne. Intriguingly, David already placed these longings in the mouth of the king, who cried out to God for relief from the midst of exile (Ps 14:7; 1 Chr 16:35–36/Ps 106:47–48).
- e. Book 5: Praise/reflection on return from exile and beginning a new era (Pss. 107–145)
 - i. *Seam*: Psalm 145 praises the kingship of Yahweh, capturing both the individual and corporate themes introduced in Psalms 1–2 and elevating God’s kingship as a higher priority than the kinship of the Davidic dynasty; its focus could be the post-exilic period where there was no Davidic king and where Yahweh’s kingship alone was at the fore.
 - ii. *Support*: Psalm 107 begins with praise that God has re-gathered the Israelites from the nations (107:1–3), potentially suggesting reflection from the period of initial restoration. Psalm 110 anticipates the return of an ideal Davidic king, and Psalm 119 addresses a renewed commitment to the Law. Psalms 120–134 are all songs for pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem for the great festivals, and all would have had an increased poignancy in the context of return from exile.

- iii. *Evaluation*: While Yahweh's kingship is exalted, it appears to be a kingship that will be manifest through his earthly king. With the heightened use of Davidic psalms and psalms of praise, Book 5 celebrates Yahweh's restoration of his people and the future fulfillment of all his promises regarding the Davidic dynasty. The period of initial restoration only pointed ahead to a more ultimate restoration (reconciliation with God) associated with the coming of the Christ.
 - 4. Main message:
 - a. God reigns supreme over Israel and the nations.
 - b. God is both just and faithful.
 - c. God is worthy of praise and receptive to the petitions and laments of the righteous.
 - 5. Initial evaluation:
 - a. Walton does a much better job than Wilson highlighting the structuring function of the seams and showing how the content of each "book" can be read to support the proposed theme.
 - b. While seeing a general focus on the Davidic covenant is likely justified, the specific details of the narrative at times seem pressed, and Walton does not address many psalms.
 - c. Walton highlight's the main message of the Psalter to be Yahweh's reign, faithfulness, and worth, which he accomplishes ultimately through his Davidic royal son. I propose the following tweaks to his "main message":
 - i. God reigns supreme over Israel and the nations.
 - ii. God reigns through his earthly Davidic king, whose global reign and influence is established only through great suffering.
 - iii. God is both just and faithful to his Davidic king and to all finding refuge in him.
 - iv. God is worthy of praise and receptive to the petitions and laments of the royal righteous one and the righteous ones identified with him.
- D. Paul House, *Old Testament Theology* (405–407)**
- 1. Overview of the approach:
 - a. Utilize the five books, highlighting main theological emphases.
 - b. Interpret the psalms according to their literary genres.
 - c. Following Kraus, stress the book's confession about God and only secondarily to what it says about the people or enemies of God.
 - 2. The Structure:
 - a. Book 1 (Pss. 1–41): The God who instructs, elects, and delivers
 - b. Book 2 (Pss. 42–72): The God who establishes and delivers
 - c. Book 3 (Pss. 73–89): The God who rebukes and rejects
 - d. Book 4 (Pss. 90–106): The God who remembers and sustains
 - e. Book 5 (Pss. 107–150): The God who restores and renews
 - 3. Support for this proposal:
 - a. *Book 1* (Pss. 1–41): *The God who instructs, elects, and delivers*. The first three psalms introduce the themes of instruction, election, and deliverance; all but four of the psalms are attributed to David, so the canon makes his life the focal point; high frequency of psalms of lament focus on Yahweh as deliver from trouble; Psalm 19 anchors the nation in God's word.
 - b. *Book 2* (Pss. 42–72): *The God who establishes and delivers*. Israel's history stops with temple worship [Pss. 66, 68]; a high-frequency of Davidic psalms continue

with focus on God's deliverance; the last psalm's ascription to Solomon suggest he is on the throne; the promises given to David have begun to materialize.

- c. *Book 3* (Pss. 73–89): *The God who rebukes and rejects*. Worship continues in Jerusalem/Zion (Pss. 84, 87); only one psalm is attributed to David and the Davidic promise is not highlighted except in Ps. 89 in the context of Jerusalem's destruction; focus is given to Israel's growth in wickedness, with Psalm 78 summarizing Israel covenant failures since the exodus.
 - d. *Book 4* (Pss. 90–106): *The God who remembers and sustains*. Mostly anonymous psalms, with attribution given only to Moses (Ps. 90) and David (Pss. 101, 103), perhaps to highlight how God sustains the faithful; Psalms 90–100 highlight God's power, especially as Creator, and Psalms 105–106 offer a historical summary that ends with prayers for return from exile; no Zion psalms appear.
 - e. *Book 5* (Pss. 107–150): *The God who restores and renews*. Post-exilic celebration of God's steadfast love (107:1; 108:1; 117:2; 118:1) with focus on worshippers returning to Jerusalem for worship (Pss. 120–134); ends with five psalms of unrestrained praise for God who rules the earth and blesses Israel; Israel's praise suggests it has moved from exodus to new exodus, and Psalm 119 anchors this new community in God's Word.
4. Major themes:
 - a. Yahweh's sovereignty over Israel and the rest of creation.
 - b. There is not a psalm that does not in some way reflect Yahweh's supremacy over all and the way his rule encounters the opposition of nations and rulers and people whose gods and power and autonomy are denied by God's reign (following Mayes).
 - c. "Monotheism in the psalms is grounded in daily life by constant confessions that God lives, speaks, acts, helps, sees, hears, answers and saves. No other god does any of these things in the Psalms. Thus whatever name is given God (e.g., Elohim or Yahweh) in Psalms, there is only one God, and this God rules creation" (407).
 5. Initial evaluation:
 - a. House helpfully focuses each section on God rather than on David or Israel, but he downplays too much the Davidic/messianic hope suggested in the Psalter's structure.
 - b. House does not focus as intently on the "seam" psalms or on the narrative progression required in Walton's approach; instead, he proposes each Book focuses on a theme addressing aspects of Yahweh's reign. I appreciate the downplay of redemptive-historical progression but think the seam psalms still play a role. I also think that the Messiah as the agent of Yahweh's reign is more apparent and celebrated in the Psalms than House allows.

E. Evaluation of Canonical Approaches

1. The Psalms are intentionally crafted with five "books," each with a concluding doxology, thus focusing due attention on Yahweh as the primary center of the whole. Psalms 1–2 appear to stand as the introduction to the whole Psalter, drawing attention to both wisdom (*walking*) and eschatology (*waiting*) and focusing on the blessed state of God's Son, the Christ, who walks in God's word and of all the righteous who find refuge in him. Psalms 146–150 provide an apt Yahweh-exalting conclusion (*worship*). While lament psalms are the highest frequency genre, psalms of praise appear intentionally concentrated at the end.
2. With these features, there does appear to be themes that are distinct to each book, but I question the idea that the canonizers intended us to read an overview of Israel's history

in the whole. Rather, I think that the “story” focuses on the hope of the Davidic kingdom promises and the anointed one whose suffering would lead to his triumph and to the suffering and triumph of those finding refuge in him. This is, in turn, portrayed from several different perspectives: Kingdom Crisis (Book 1), Kingdom Expected (Book 2), Kingdom Judged (Book 3), Kingdom in Exile (Book 4), and Kingdom Restored and Consummated (Book 5). Wilson and Walton are correct to see a redemptive-historical trajectory in the whole Psalter, and their use of “seam” psalms has some validity. However, they wrongly interpret the seams in light of David’s reign rather than that of his greater Son’s. House’s Yahweh-focused approach is helpful, but it also fails to account for the messianic dimensions that are clear from the very beginning.

- a. *Book 1* (Pss 1–41): Kingdom Crisis. At stake here is the kingdom in crisis or under threat. The focus is *not* on David’s throne but on that of his future offspring, who would be regarded the Son of God. Nearly all the psalms are Davidic and therefore draw attention to the hope of this coming one, whose kingdom God would establish only through the suffering of his Anointed/Christ. David at times prays for this king (e.g., Pss 14, 20, 21) and other times predictively speaks his very words out of the midst of pain (e.g., Ps 22) or in light of deliverance (e.g., Ps 23).
 - i. Ps 3: Despite his King’s numerous adversaries, Yahweh has saved and will save his King and people.
 - ii. Ps 41: Despite his King’s many enemies, Yahweh counts his kind-hearted, representative King as blessed, will protect and preserve his life, and will set him in his presence forever.
- b. *Book 2* (Pss 42–72): Kingdom Expected. Within this section focus remains fixed on the kingship of the Christ in his journey through tribulation unto triumph. Almost all the psalms are Davidic, and they give added attention to Jerusalem and to the Anointed one’s kingship.
 - i. Pss 42–43: God is a sure Rock worth hoping in amid despair, for he will save, vindicate, and defend his King’s cause against ungodly adversaries.
 - ii. Ps 72: Yahweh God will glorify himself by elevating his royal Son’s global kingdom forever, which will fulfill all of David’s prayers.
- c. *Book 3* (Pss 73–89): Kingdom Judged. Psalms lament the disgraceful, broken state of the Davidic dynasty, while also reminding the reader of the Davidic kingdom promises. Almost no psalms are Davidic.
 - i. Ps 73: The true Israel are those who follow the pure-hearted King in looking to God for strength and waiting upon him to cause the evil doers to perish and to receive his own into glory.
 - ii. Ps 89: Yahweh’s wrath has brought a temporary end to the Davidic monarchy, but his steadfast loyalty and faithfulness ensures that his promises to David to establish an eternal throne are still sure.
- d. *Book 4* (Pss 90–106): Kingdom in Exile. These psalms address the devastation of exile, the need for covenant faithfulness (as echoed in the lives of Moses and David), the sovereign reign of Yahweh, and the hope his past forgiveness gives for the fulfillment of the kingdom promises. Again, almost no psalms are Davidic.
 - i. Pss 90–91: With typological anticipations of exile and a longing for rest, Moses pleads with Yahweh from the wilderness to satisfy and sustain his people with his steadfast love and to show sustained favor upon them as they pass their years under God’s wrath and as they look ahead to fresh times of favor (Ps 90). He then predictively proclaims to the coming King that God

- will deliver him and protect him (Ps 91:1–13), to which Yahweh affirms that he will satisfy him with long life and save (Ps 91:14–16).
- ii. Ps 106: Yahweh God’s steadfast loyalty is greater than Israel’s sin, and just as he has done in the past, his will remember his covenant and save his people from exile through a new exodus.
 - e. *Book 5* (Pss 107–150): Kingdom Restored and Consummated. The Psalter ends with renewed focus on God’s Word and worship in Jerusalem, on God’s promises to David, and with great praise, all in light of God’s sustained kingdom work. The increased number of Davidic psalms heighten hope for the fulfillment of the messianic promises.
 - i. Ps 107: Praise Yahweh for and consider the significance of his steadfast loyalty by which he redeemed his people from exile—from trouble, distress, and the shadow of death (cf. Luke 1:79).
 - ii. Ps 145: Yahweh, who is God and King, is worthy of highest and eternal praise for his character and deeds manifest on behalf of his saints.
 3. The Psalter provides the prayers of the Christ and the songs of the saved. It overviews the anointed one’s journey of suffering and exaltation, and it guides the laments, thanksgivings, and praises of all who find refuge in him. The Psalms give a Godward voice in periods of battling and doubting, succeeding and rejoicing, wavering and running, being disciplined and longing, being restored and praising.
 4. The conclusion at the end of Psalm 72 suggests that books one and two were a Psalter before the completion of the whole. The whole could have come about progressively as the Davidic kingdom hope rose and fell with Israel’s own history. Some individual(s) in the post-exilic period, living without a king but in light of the kingdom promises, finalized the whole as a messianic song book.

Fig. 18.3. The Structure of the Psalter: A Cantata of Yahweh’s Reign through His Messiah

Book 1	Ps 1	<i>Walking with the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Wisdom)	Introduction
	Ps 2	<i>Waiting in the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Eschatology)	
	Pss 3–41	Kingdom Crisis: Yahweh instructs, elects, and delivers his Christ and his people [Doxology: 41:13] (Almost all Davidic; many individual laments and most mention enemies)	Body
Book 2	Pss 42–72	Kingdom Expected: Yahweh establishes his Christ and delivers [Doxology: 72:18–19] (Almost all Davidic; mostly laments and “enemy” psalms; keys psalms: 45, 48, 51, 54–65)	
Book 3	Pss 73–89	Kingdom Judged: Yahweh rebukes, disciplines, and gives kingdom-hope to his people [Doxology: 89:52] (Almost no Davidic; Asaph and Sons of Korah collections; key psalm: 78)	
Book 4	Pss 90–106	Kingdom in Exile: Yahweh remembers his people and sustains the faithful [Doxology: 106:48] (Almost no Davidic; praise collections: 95–100; key psalms: 90, 103–105)	
Book 5	Pss 107–145	Kingdom Restored and Consummated: Yahweh restores and renews by fulfilling his kingdom promises [Doxology: Pss 146–150] (Increased number of Davidic; Hallelujah collection: 111–117; Songs of Ascent: 120–134; Davidic reprise: 138–145; keys psalms: 107, 110, 119)	
	Pss 146–150	<i>Worshipping on account of the Messiah</i> (Kingdom Praise)	Conclusion

VIII. The Portrait of the Anointed King (= Christ) in the Psalms

- A. An Overview:** Royal psalms display a portrait of an unparalleled coming deliverer (Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144).⁵ When taken together, the image the psalms display is far greater than any earthly king of the OT age. As such, I believe it best to read the royal psalms as *direct* (as opposed to typological) foretellings of the Messiah Jesus, some of which express his own words and some of which express the words of those finding refuge in him.
1. He is not simply God's "son" (89:27[H28]) but his "begotten" son (2:7), who belongs to YHWH (89:18[H19]) and remains ever devoted to him (18:20–24[H21–25]; 21:1, 7[H2, 8]; cf. 63:1–8, 11[H2–9, 12]); he is seated at God's right hand (110:1) and is himself tagged both "God" (45:6[H7]) and David's "Lord" (110:1); he will experience joy in God's presence forever (21:6[H7]; cf. 16:11).
 2. He will receive YHWH's everlasting blessing (21:6[H7]; 45:2[H3]; cf. 72:17), fulfill the Davidic covenant promises (89:28–37[H29–38]; 132:11–12, 17–18), and be the heir of both the nations (2:8) and the Melchizedekian priesthood (110:1–4).
 3. The nations and peoples of the earth stand against him (2:1–3; 110:2), but he will, through tribulation unto triumph (18:37–50[H38–51]; 20:1–9[H2–10]; 21:1, 4[H2, 5]; 144:7–8, 11), overcome all of them (45:3–5[H4–6]; 89:22–23[89:23–24]; 110:1, 5–7; 132:18), and declare God's praises among them (18:49[H50]).
 4. By YHWH's act (2:6, 8; 18:31–36, 43, 46–50[H32–37, 44, 47–51]; 21:1–13[H2–14]; 110:1–2; 132:17–18), he will establish global rule (2:8–12; 45:17[H18]; 72:8–11; 89:25[H26]; 110:5–6; 132:18) based in Zion (2:6; 110:2; 132:13, 17).
 5. He will reign forever (21:4[H5]; 45:6[H7]; 72:5) in peace (72:7) and fruitfulness (72:3, 16), and he will rule in righteousness and justice (45:4, 6–7[H5, 7–8]; 72:2–3; 101:1–8), which will include befriending the poor and defeating the oppressor (72:2, 4, 12–14).
 6. Those finding refuge in him will be blessed (2:12; 72:17; 144:15), and under his rule, they will flourish (72:7) and enjoy abundance (72:3; 144:13–15), being both prosperous (72:3) and fruitful (72:16; 144:12).
 7. He will possess an everlasting name (72:17), be preeminent among men (45:2, 7[H3, 8]), and stand as the object of unending thanks (72:15).
 8. He is Yahweh's son (2:7; 89:27), seated at his right hand (110:1) and is himself divine (45:6).
- B. The Anointed One as All-Conquering King**
1. Royal Psalms:
 - a. Psalm 2:
 - i. The imagery of God's Son bearing global rule and demanding global homage portrays a kingdom far more vast than anything experienced by Israel's monarchs, even David.
 - ii. Most likely, therefore, Psalm 2 appears to speak in a direct prophetic way about the ultimate, earthly, royal deliver through whom Yahweh would establish global justice and peace.
 - iii. The very introduction of the Psalter calls readers to anticipate the global, curse-overcoming work of the Messiah. The rest of the psalter supports this conclusion by emphasizing his victory and clarifying the means by which he will attain it—great persecution and suffering.
 - b. As noted above, the royal psalms like 2, 45, 72, 110 portray a king and reign far greater than anything experienced in Israel's monarchy. The earthly king can be

⁵ Some of this synthesis is adapted from J. Alec Motyer, "Messiah[OT]," in NBD, 2:989.

called “God” (45:7[8]), the “Son” of God (2:7), and the “Lord” of David (110:1), whose reign is both global (2:8; 72:8, 11) and eternal (45:6[7]; 72:5, 7, 17; 110:4).

- Ps 2:7–8. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”
 - Ps. 45:6–7[7–8]. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; ⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.
 - Ps 72:5, 7–8, 11, 17. May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! . . . ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! . . . ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him! . . . ¹⁷ May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!
 - Ps 110:1, 4. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” . . . ⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- c. David was a prophet, who wrote about the Christ.
- i. In Acts 2:30–31, Peter declared, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, [David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” Later he asserted that “*all* the prophets” foretold that God’s “Christ would suffer” followed by days of salvation (Acts 3:18, 23; cf. 10:43).
 - ii. 2 Samuel 23 points in this same direction when it records “the last words of David” (23:1), directly following 2 Sam 22, v. 50 of which is cited in Rom 15:9 and applied to Christ.
 - (1) The ESV of 2 Sam 23:1 follows the Hebrew MT, which reads: “The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, *the oracle of the man* who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel.” The phrase “the oracle of the man” occurs in only two other places in the OT, both of which introduce messianic oracles: (a) Balaam’s oracle about the future king who would strike Gog (Agag) and whose kingdom would be exalted (Num 24:3) and (b) Agur’s oracle regarding the one who is the source of all wisdom and who has a special, all-wise “son” (Prov 30:1, 4).
 - (2) Where the ESV/Hebrew MT read 2 Sam 23:1 as “the oracle of the man who *was raised on high, the anointed* of the God of Jacob,” the LXX reads differently. Where the Hebrew text has “on high,” the LXX has *epi* “concerning,” which follows an equally valid reading of the Hebrew text without any change to the consonants (though with different vowel points). When read this way, a messianic rendering rises to the surface: “The declaration of David, son of Jesse, and the declaration of the mighty man raised up—concerning the Messiah of the God of Jacob and the Delightful One of the songs of Israel.” If we read the LXX this way, the translator is viewing David’s own songs/psalms as pointing prophetically ahead to the Messiah. The Hebrew Masoretes, working after the rise of Christianity, may have added the vowels in a way to counter this highly messianic but originally intended reading.

- (3) Regardless of the reading of 23:1, the oracle in David's "last words" clearly points forward beyond David himself to an expected deliverer whom God foretold in the covenant he made with David (v. 5). This one would rule justly over men in the fear of God and bring with him the dawn of new creation (vv. 3b–4). He would overcome the one of worthlessness who brings with him those who are cursed, and he would do so with a spear of iron (vv. 6–7; cf. Ps 2:9). David's hope is in this one, whose identity grows out of the covenant God made with him (v. 5). The images of light and the sprouting of new creation (v. 4) and the destruction of thorns (v. 6) with a rod of iron (v. 7) are all associated elsewhere with the promised royal deliverer (Gen 3:15, 18; Num 24:6–7, 17; Ps 2:8–9; Rev 19:15; 22:1–2, 16).
- d. The biblical song writers were "prophets."
- i. Jesus associates "kings" with the prophets who longed to see Jesus' day. Peter also explicitly declared that David was a "prophet" who understood that he was predicting truths about the Christ that were not true of himself. Because Peter stresses how David's body did see corruption, he is clearly not reading 16:10–11 typologically (double-fulfillment) but is rather reading it as *direct* prophecy of Christ's resurrection.
 - Matt 13:17. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
 - Luke 10:24. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
 - Acts 2:30–31. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on this throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.
 - ii. Peter and Paul affirmed that *all* the prophets foresaw the Christ's suffering and the glories that would follow.
 - Acts 3:18. But what God foretold by the mouth of *all* the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.
 - Acts 3:22–24. Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you."²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people."²⁴ And *all* the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.
 - Acts 10:43. To him *all* the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.
 - 1 Pet 1:10–12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.
 - iii. The Psalms are part of the Scripture that predicted Christ's coming.
 - Luke 24:44–47. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and *the Psalms* must be fulfilled."⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

- iv. The other song writers of the Psalter were “seers” whose “prophesied” words became the praises of Israel.
 - (1) 1 Chr 25:1–5. David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, *who prophesied* with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals. The list of those who did the work and of their duties was: ² Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah, sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, *who prophesied* under the direction of the king. ³ Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, *who prophesied* with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. ⁴ Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. ⁵ All these were the sons of Heman *the king’s seer*, according to the promise of God to exalt him, for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.
 - (2) 2 Chr 29:30. And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph *the seer*. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.
 - (3) 2 Chr 35:15. The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun *the king’s seer*; and the gatekeepers were at each gate. They did not need to depart from their service, for their brothers the Levites prepared for them.
- e. Later biblical authors interpret the royal psalms messianically.
 - i. The OT saints were reading the psalms as messianic music. Examples from most recent to most distant include:
 - (1) Zechariah: Zech 9:10 applies Ps 72:8 to the eschatological hope of the royal deliverer.
 - (a) Ps 72:8. May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!
 - (b) Zech 9:9–10. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; *his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*.
 - (2) Jeremiah: Jer 33:20–21 affirms Ps 89:35–37[36–38] in stressing that the royal offspring’s eternal throne is as certain the sun.
 - (a) Ps 89:35–37[36–38]. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶ His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. ³⁷ Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.” *Selah*
 - (b) Jer 33:20–22. Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹ then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me.

(3) Isaiah:

- (a) *Isaiah's use of Psalm 89.* Yahweh fulfills his promise to keep his steadfast loyalty and sure covenant for David (Ps 89:28[29]) by the steadfast loyalty and faithfulness of the new David (Isa 55:3).
 - (i) Psa. 89:28[29]. My steadfast loyalty I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will remain sure for him. (DeRouchie's translation)
 - (ii) Isa 55:3. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the steadfast loyalties by [the new] David, which are sure. (DeRouchie's translation)
- (b) *Isaiah's use of Ps 98.* The music of Ps 98 directly relates to the messianic age:
 - (i) The new song
 - Ps 98:1. Oh sing to the LORD a new song.
 - Isa 42:10. Sing to the LORD a new song.
 - (ii) The holy arm
 - Ps 98:1. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
 - Isa 52:10. The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
 - (iii) The nations see Yahweh's righteousness
 - Ps 98:2. The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
 - Isa 62:2. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.
 - (iv) The ends of the earth have seen Yahweh's salvation.
 - Ps 98:3. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
 - Isa 52:10. All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
 - (v) Break forth in singing.
 - Ps 98:4. Break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
 - Isa 52:9. Break forth together into singing.
 - (vi) The voice of song.
 - Ps 98:5. Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the voice of song! (DeRouchie's translation)
 - Isa 51:3. For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.
 - (vii) Creation sings.

- Ps 98:7. Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it!
 - Isa 55:12. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
- (viii) The Lord will judge with equity.
- Ps 98:9. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.
 - Isa 11:4. But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.
- (c) *Isaiah's use of Ps 118*.
- (i) Both Psalms and Isaiah typologically apply the language of the exodus from Exod 15:2:
- *Yahweh is my strength, song, and salvation.* Exod 15:2. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. Ps 118:14. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Isa 12:2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.
 - *The righteous ones enter Yahweh's city.* Ps 118:19–20. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. Isa 26:2. Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.
- (ii) Isaiah applies to the Messiah the Psalter's language regarding the Anointed One as the rejected stone.
- Ps 118:22. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
 - Isa 8:14. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
- (iii) Isaiah applies the Psalter's language of the Anointed One's deliverance to the salvation the Messiah brings.
- *Let us rejoice and be glad.* Ps 118:24. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Isa 25:9. It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."
 - *Save us!* Ps 118:25. Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Isa 25:9. It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

- *I will extol you and give thanks! Ps 118:28.* You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. *Isa 25:1.* O LORD, you are my God; I will extol you; I will give thanks to your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
- ii. Paul and the author of Hebrews applied Psalm 2 to Christ.
 - *Acts 4:24–28.* And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?’²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
 - *Acts 13:33.* God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, “YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.”
 - *Heb 1:5.* For to which of the angels did He ever say, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”? And again, “I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?
 - *Heb 5:5.* So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.”
- iii. Hebrews applies Psalm 45 to Christ.
 - *Heb 1:8–9.* But of the Son *He says*, “YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.⁹ “YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”
- iv. Jesus, his opponents, Peter, and the author of Hebrews applied a messianic reading to Psalm 110:1:
 - *Matt 22:41–46.* Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “*The son of David.*” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET”’? “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Cf. Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44.)
 - *Acts 2:34–36.* For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.
 - *Heb 1:13.* But to which of the angels has He ever said, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?
 - *Heb 10:11–13.* Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.
- v. The author of Hebrews applied Ps 110:4 to Christ.
 - *Heb 5:5–6.* So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”; just as He says also in another *passage*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

- Heb 7:15–22. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested *of Him*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, ‘YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER’”); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

2. The Davidic covenant

- a. Ps 89:35–37[36–38] stresses the eternality of the Davidic covenant, even though the following verses highlight how the kingdom’s division, rebellion, and, perhaps, even exile, makes it appear that God has revoked his promise.
 - Ps 89:35–37[36–38]. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.
- b. Beginning with Psalm 90, Book 4 looks back to the Mosaic era and highlights how God forgave in the past, thus giving hope that he could do so again. Paralleling this theme is the highlighting of Yahweh’s reign over all. Then Book 5, includes a heightened number of Davidic psalms and praises in order to give hope that God’s kingdom promises through his Messiah will indeed come to pass.
- c. In Book 5, Psalm 110:4 couches in an oath the declaration that David’s “Lord” is “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” If God has promised to keep his otherwise unknown oath regarding the priesthood of Melchizedek, certainly he will keep his explicit oath regarding the Davidic throne. Psalm 89 highlighted this oath three times:
 - Ps 89:3–4[4–5]. You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”
 - Ps 89:35–36[36–37]. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.
 - Ps 89:49[50]. Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
- d. In this context, Ps 132 of Book 5 reaffirms God’s promises to the Davidic house. The conditional nature of the promise clarifies the interruption in the Davidic dynasty (i.e., the exile and period of initial restoration), but the promises of God to the Davidic house still stand. The dynasty will not be extinguished, and the editors of the Psalter appear to have real hope in the revival of the Davidic house.
 - Ps 132:1, 11–18. Remember, O LORD, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured. . . .¹¹ The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: “One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. ¹² If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.” ¹³ For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: ¹⁴ “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. ¹⁵ I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. ¹⁶ Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. ¹⁷ There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. ¹⁸ His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine.”

3. Conclusions:

- a. The editors of the Psalter appear to read as prophetic all royal psalms and psalms addressing the Davidic covenant. Though darkness had fallen over the Davidic dynasty, they believed Yahweh’s kingdom promises to David still stood, and they

anticipated a day when a new royal deliverer would rise, this time to establish a global kingdom that would never end.

- b. After the conclusion of Book 2 in Ps 72:20, which reads, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,” Books 3 and 4 portray the downfall and loss of the Davidic kingdom and call into question the future of the Davidic covenant. Yet Book 5 sees the initial restoration to the land, and with it comes anticipation that the full kingdom promises would be consummated. The high concentration of Davidic psalms matched with the clear testimony of Psalms 110 and 132 suggests hope in the Davidic king, the ultimate Son of God who himself could be called both David’s Lord and God.

C. The Anointed One as Suffering Servant

1. The Psalms present us two distinct portraits of the Davidic Anointed One, the first as *all-conquering king* (see above) and the second as *innocent sufferer*. Significantly, the royal psalms identify that the path to the Messiah’s triumph is tribulation (e.g., 18:37–50[H38–51]; 20:1–9[H2–10]; 21:1, 4[H2, 5]; 144:7–8, 11), and because most of the laments portrays the anointed king in the midst of deep suffering, one can legitimately assume that the king of the laments is the *same* king of the royal psalms—that is, he is the one greater than David who would rule all the world. From this perspective, we may legitimately read the *whole* Psalter as a direct prophetic expression of the Messiah’s suffering and sovereignty portrayed through both his words and the words of those finding refuge in him.
 - a. As the anointed Son of God, the Davidic king is the one to whom all the nations of the world will bow. As already highlighted, this all-conquering deliverer is depicted as someone far greater than any Israelite king, and therefore the image prophetically anticipates the greater Son of David. The second portrait of the Davidic king is that of innocent sufferer, who only survives because of divine intervention (as seen in the laments and thanksgivings).
 - b. Of the 73 psalms that include “David” in the heading, 13 have titles that give clarity about their context of composition. These historical notes almost all point to problems in David’s life that are specifically referred to in 1–2 Samuel (in contrast to Chronicles). Many other “Davidic” psalms that do not include a specific context still address similar troubles, wherein a righteous man appeals for help to gain respite from enemies. Some examples:
 - Psalm 7: “O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers” (v. 1[2]); “Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies” (v. 6[7]); “The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me” (v. 8[9]).
 - Psalm 17:1–7: “Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! From your presence let my vindication come! Let your eyes behold the right! You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.
 - Psalm 18: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (v. 1[3]); “He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me. The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me” (vv. 19–20[20–21]); “I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt. So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight” (vv. 23–24[24–25]).

- Psalm 26:1–12: “Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trust in the LORD without wavering. Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds. O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.”
- c. In light of the fact that first the portrait of David (i.e., conquering king) is clearly viewed messianically both within and outside the Psalter, should we view the portrayal of the innocent sufferer also as directly prophetic?
- 2. The conviction that Yahweh will vindicate the righteous and judge the wicked is the key theme of Psalm 1, and in light of its intentional link with Psalm 2, the blessed man of Psalm 1 is none other than the royal Son, against whom the nations rage: “Blessed is the man ... [and] blessed are those who find refuge in him” (Pss 1:1; 2:12). The introduction to the Psalter, therefore, calls us to read the two portraits of the royal Son in relation to one another. Significantly, the NT views the hostility of the nations and peoples against God (Ps. 2:1–2) as climaxing at Christ’s death on the cross (Acts 4:25–28), and it views the moment when God’s royal Son becomes “begotten” (Ps. 2:7) as the moment of his resurrection (Acts 13:32–33).
- 3. Because the Psalm titles make clear that the editors knew the accounts of David’s life in 1–2 Samuel, we are encouraged to compare the psalmist’s voice with the portrait of David in this earlier narrative material. When we read the psalmist’s claims that there is no wrong in his hands (Ps 7:3[4]) or that Yahweh dealt with him according to his righteousness (18:20[21]), the editors appear to be calling us to see that the historical David did not line up with such claims and that therefore we need to read the innocent sufferer psalms messianically, pointing to the more ultimate David—Jesus Christ (e.g., Pss 3, 7, 9, 13, 18).
- 4. When the portrait of the innocent sufferer is read as direct prophetic prediction pointing to the Messiah, we gain more pillars (along with texts like Isaiah 53) that clarify the NT’s teaching that the Son of David only inherits his kingdom by walking a path of suffering.
 - Luke 24:44–46. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and *the Psalms* must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
 - Acts 26:22–23. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.
- 5. The juxtaposition of the exalted Christ in Psalm 2 with the persecuted Christ in Psalms 3 and beyond can easily be seen to teach that the Christ will only triumph through tribulation. The editors of the Psalter appear to have been reading the psalms this way, and 2 Sam 23:1 can easily be read as suggesting that David actually intended this from the beginning.

D. Some Sample Journey’s into Reading the Psalms as Direct Messianic Prophecy

1. Psalm 110 as direct prophecy of Jesus Christ’s exaltation, with its implications.
 - a. NT authors regularly identify Jesus Christ as the “Lord” of Psalm 110, which opens, “A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand,

until I make your enemies your footstool.” The way the NT authors use this text identifies it as *direct* prophecy rather than typological.

- b. Of this text, Jesus queried, “How can they say that the Christ is David’s son?”⁴² For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,⁴³ until I make your enemies your footstool.’⁴⁴ David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?” (Luke 20:41–44; cf. Matt 22:42–45; Mark 12:35–37). Here Jesus identifies the psalmist as David but notes that he speaks of another who is his superior and who would sit at the right hand of Yahweh. Jesus identifies that *he* is this figure.
- c. Similarly, after noting that David himself died and that his body was buried and deteriorated, Peter highlights that David also did *not* ascend to God’s right hand but that Jesus did: “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.’³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made [Jesus] both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:34–36). Peter thus identifies the “Lord” of Psalm 110 as directly referring to Jesus.
- d. Multiple times the author of Hebrews also cites this psalm and applies it directly to Christ.
 - Heb 1:13. And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?
 - Heb 7:21. But this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’” (Cf. 5:6; 7:17.)
- e. Significantly, Psalm 109 is a “psalm of David” that includes many statements that appear to prepare us for the exaltation of David’s “Lord” in Psalm 110.
 - i. For example:
 - Ps 109:3. They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause. *Note*: Jesus cites this text to clarify that those standing against him were merely “fulfilling” what the Scripture predicted (John 15:25).
 - Ps 109:6–8. Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand at his right hand.⁷ When he is tried, let him come forth guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin!⁸ May his days be few; may another take his office! *Note*: The disciples cite this text as a ground for replacing Judas as apostle after his betrayal of Jesus (Acts 1:20).
 - Ps 109:24–25. My knees are weak through fasting; my body has become gaunt, with no fat.²⁵ I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they wag their heads. *Note*: Matthew alludes to this text (and Ps 22:7[8]) when he refers to those mocking Christ at his crucifixion (Matt 27:39).
 - ii. Read canonically, Ps 109 ends by echoing Ps 16 and 22 and by setting us up for the exaltation in Psalm 110. The suffering “servant,” who is shamed and wounded, will ultimately be glad (Ps 109:28; cf. Ps 16:11; 21:6; Isa 53:11). He will give thanks to God among a throng (Ps 109:30; cf. 22:22, 27[23, 28]), “for he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death” (Ps 109:31). As in Ps 22 where death gave birth to rescue and then praise among the brothers, here death is faced with confidence and hope in future joy, and is followed in Psalm 110 by the suffering servant’s exaltation to the right hand of God with full supremacy.
 - iii. As Paul would later say, “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (Phil 2:8–9). Or as Yahweh declared through Isaiah, “Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted....¹² I will divide him a

portion in the many, and he shall divide as spoil the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 52:13; 53:12).

2. Peter’s conviction that Psalm 16 speaks of Christ’s resurrection, with its implications.
 - a. We have already highlighted Peter’s use of Psalm 110 in Acts 2. But before he speaks of Christ’s ascension, he cites Psalm 16 in order to stress Christ’s resurrection. In Acts 2:22–31, Peter cites Ps 16:8–11 in order to supply biblical grounding for Christ’s resurrection. He notes first “David says *concerning him*” (Acts 2:24), and then cites word-for-word from the LXX of Ps 16:8–11 (= 15:8–11 LXX), but omitting the last line of the psalm (“pleasures at your right hand forever”): “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence” (Acts 2:25–28). At this, Peter stresses how David’s body was buried and remains in the tomb, which identifies that Ps 16 was *not* talking about David’s body. Instead, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:30–31).
 - b. Of this text, Marshall writes, “Ps. 16 seems to be understood as a statement by this descendent [of David] that is voiced by David. Since David could not be talking about himself in these verses (because he himself died and suffered corruption), he must have been speaking prophetically in the first person on behalf of someone else” (*Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*, 538). Against those who claim David is speaking through typological rather than direct prophecy, Marshall queries, “Is it appropriate to use the term ‘typological’ of a statement that was not true of the ‘type’ himself?” (538).
3. David’s prayers for a future anointed king in Pss 20–21, with their implications.
 - a. In Psalm 110, we saw David speaking of another tagged his “Lord.” In Psalms 20–21, both “Psalms of David,” David the psalmist does something similar. In Psalm 20 he has the psalmist expressing his longing that God save *a different king* out of great calamity: “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! ... ⁶ Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.... ⁹ O LORD, save the king!” (Ps 20:1, 6, 9[2, 7, 10]).
 - b. Psalm 21 then celebrates that God did deliver. Specifically, with an apparent echo of Ps 16:10–11, Ps 21:4–7[5–8] praises God for delivering *another king* from death: “He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. ⁵ His glory is great through your salvation; splendor and majesty you bestow on him. ⁶ For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence. ⁷ For the king trust in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.”
 - c. If Psalm 16 was direct prophecy about Jesus Christ’s resurrection (see above), and if Psalms 20–21 anticipate this same deliverance, then there is good grounds for reading David speaking here about his superior Lord (as in Psalm 110), pleading first to God for this future king’s deliverance and then celebrating the foreseen salvation he will experience. With statements like “we trust in the name of the

LORD *our* God” (Ps 20:7[8]), “May he answer *us* when *we* call” (20:9[10]), and “*We* will sing and praise your power” (21:13[14]), we see David and others joining this king in rejoicing. The greater king’s context of praise becomes the saints context for praise.

- d. In light of the above, a canonical reading would suggest that Psalm 22 then has this greater-Davidic king telling of his sufferings and victories (in first person speech), and then Psalm 23 has him testifying to God provision and protection and to his future hope.
 - e. As you read through the psalter, once you identify the Anointed one who is in focus, whether as sufferer or as sovereign, you have identified the prophetic vision of the Christ.
4. Paul’s use of Pss 14 and 53 that identify David’s words as those of another.
- a. In Rom 3:10–18, Paul includes a series of OT quotations, many of them from the Psalms, in order to highlight the utter sinfulness of *all* humanity outside Christ. He opens with a citation from Ps 14:1–3 and 53:1–3: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understand; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Rom 3:10–12). Paul leaves no room for thinking that some may actually be good. Instead, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). Thus he stresses the need for all—Jew and Gentile alike—to find justification in Christ alone.
 - b. Back in Psalm 14, a psalm “of David,” the psalmist declares of “the children of Adam” that “they have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one” (Ps 14:3). Interpreters who see David himself as the primary mouthpiece must see him distinguishing himself from these rebels of humanity when he writes, “Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread” (14:4). However, Paul’s reading would not allow David to separate himself from the guilty, for Paul’s point is that *all* have sinned.
 - c. Ps 14:5–6 give us a clue that David the psalmist is here, once again, speaking through the lens of direct prophecy, with his words actually being the words of the perfect Christ. There are some who stand opposite of the wicked in this psalm, but it is only because they are part of the generation of “the righteous one”: “There they [i.e., the evildoers of this world] are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous one. ⁶ You would shame the plans of the poor, but the LORD is his refuge.” Throughout the Psalter, there is only one true “righteous one,” the anointed of God, and others tagged “righteous” are only so because of their identification with him. As I write elsewhere (*How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 77–78):

From beginning to end, the Psalter focuses heavily on the hostility of mankind against YHWH and his anointed and on YHWH’s final triumph through his righteous king for all finding refuge in him. The general perspective of the righteous and the wicked is laid out in Book 1, where there is only one true “righteous one,” the anointed of God (e.g., Pss. 5:12[H13]; 7:9[H10]; 14:5; 34:19, 21[H20, 22]; 37:12, 16, 25, 32). He is the “blessed man” (1:1), against whom stand various enemies both near and far (e.g., 2:1–2; 3:1; 5:8[H9]; 6:8[H9]; 7:1, 6, 9[H2, 7, 10]). Others are tagged as “blessed” and “righteous” (e.g., 1:5–6; 32:11; 33:1; 34:15[H17]; 37:17, 29, 39), but they are only so because they find refuge in the righteous *one* (2:12). Apart from this anointed king, “there is none who does good, not even one” (14:3; 53:3[H4]; cf. Rom.

3:12). In the end, “affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous *one* will be condemned” (Ps 34:21[H22]). YHWH’s royal Son (2:7) will “break them with a rod of iron” (2:9). Therefore, evildoers “are in great terror,” knowing that “God is with the generation of the righteous one,” who himself finds refuge in the Lord (14:5–6). A proper reading of the Psalms requires that we keep in mind the progressive movement through tribulation unto triumph and that we seek to find deeper refuge in the king, whom we now know today as Jesus.

5. *Extra Note:* 2 Sam 1:18–27 records a song possibly termed “the Bow” (see ESV text note at 1:18) that David penned in lament of Saul and Jonathan’s death. Unlike 2 Sam 22, which also appears as Ps 18:2–50, or 1 Chr 16:8–34 and 35–36, which also appear as Ps 105:1–15, 96:1–13, and 106:47–48, this song is *not* found in the Psalter. One reason may be that it so specifically relates to David’s historical situation that it did not fit into the Psalter—specifically, it focuses on the battle between Israel and the Philistines at Mount Gilboa (2 Sam 1:19–21), and it identifies Jonathan (1:22–23, 26) and Saul (1:21–24) numerous times. While the explicit messianic prophecies found in both Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam 2:1–10) and David’s final words (2 Sam 23:1–7) are also not fully present in the Psalter (though parts may be alluded to), the specific historical details found in 2 Sam 1:18–27 are unparalleled in the Psalms and likely explains why the song would not fit there. Stated differently, David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam 1:18–27 is unlike the laments of the Psalter, bearing a level of historical grounding in his day that is not clear in the Psalms. Were the rest of the psalm bodies (not the headings) so grounded in David’s time, recasting his *own* stories, one would have expected them to look more like what we find in 2 Sam 1:18–27.

E. What about “I’m a Sinner” Psalms?

1. A natural question the proposed reading of the Psalter is, “What about the numerous times the psalmist himself claims to be a sinner?” Psalm 51, for example, opens, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, and you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps 51:1–4[3–6]).
2. The normal pattern for preachers today is to qualify every statement of the psalmist’s innocence before God with statements like, “He is actually not declaring his perfect obedience or righteousness before God but only his innocence as it relates to this matter.” These same preachers, however, then affirm *without qualifying comment* the psalmist’s affirmations of his own sinfulness (e.g., Ps 51). I propose the reverse may be more justified, especially in light of how the NT authors unreservedly apply both the sinless sufferer and “I’m a sinner” psalms to Christ Jesus. That is, while the NT authors affirmed that Jesus *was* perfectly sinless (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5) and fully righteous (Rom 5:18–19; 1 John 2:1), they did not hesitate to link Christ with psalms that identify the speaker as having sinned. I suggest that the NT authors may have been reading the “I’m a sinner” psalms through the lens of substitution and imputation. The Christ becomes so identified with his people that he takes on their identity, becoming sin in their place and receiving on himself the just wrath of God:
 - a. 2 Cor 5:21. For our sake [God] made [Christ] to *be sin* who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
 - b. Gal 3:13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by *becoming a curse* for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”

- c. 1 Pet 2:24. He himself *bore our sins in his body* on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
- 3. An overview:
 - a. **Psalm 6**
 - i. Pss 5–6 are *filled* with allusions to Pss 1–2. The voice we hear in Ps 6 is thus the voice of the Anointed of Ps 2, and though he is receiving the anger God promises to pour out on the nations (Ps 2:5; 6:1[2]), the thrust of his cry is, “I am *not* your enemy, yet you seem to be treating me like I am.” In light of this he notes, “The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer” (6:9[10]), whereas all his enemies “shall be ashamed and greatly troubled” (6:10[11]).
 - ii. Psalm 6 is a psalm of lament, and the NT cites the psalm in two different contexts. Just after the triumphal entry, Jesus pleads for God to deliver him from his encroaching death (John 12:27) using the language of Ps 6:3–4[4–5]. Then in Matt 7:23 and Luke 13:27, using the king’s charge in Ps 6:8[9], Jesus promises to force all workers of evil to depart on the day people enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the innocent sufferer of Psalm 6, who views the oppression of enemies as a manifestation of God’s wrath against him.
 - iii. This is what John the Baptist meant when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). And it captures well Paul’s words, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Out of this context, the psalmist cries, “Turn, O LORD, deliver my life” (Ps 6:4[5]). Just as Psalm 2 is about the (capital A) Anointed One, Psalm 6, which alludes to Ps 2, is also about *him*, not David. The pattern set forth here should color our reading of the declarations of innocence and sinfulness that follow.
 - b. **Psalm 22**
 - i. The NT authors cite no psalm more frequently in relation to Christ’s passion than Psalm 22: See Ps. 22:7[H8] in Matt. 27:39; Ps. 22:8[H9] in Matt. 27:43; Ps. 22:15[H16] in John 19:28; Ps. 22:16[H17] in Luke 24:40 with John 20:25; Ps. 22:18[H19] in John 19:24 and Matt. 27:35; Ps. 22:22[H23] in Heb. 2:12 and Matt. 28:10; John 20:17; Rom. 8:29; Ps. 22:24[H25] in Heb. 5:7. It is a psalm of David, yet the words are so explicitly predictive that we must read them as pointing to someone other than David himself.
 - (1) Mankind scorned the psalmist, his people despised him (22:6[7]; cf. 2:1). Those scorning him wagged their heads at him (22:7[8]; cf. Matt 27:39), and they mocked his claim to God’s favor (Ps 22:8[9]; cf. Matt 27:43).
 - (2) With a dry mouth, the psalmist’s tongue stuck to his jaws (Ps 22:15[16]; cf. John 19:28), and he felt God was laying him in the dust of death (Ps 22:15[16]; cf. Isa 53:10). His accusers pierced his hands and feet (Ps 22:16; cf. Luke 24:39–40 with John 20:25). They also cast lots for his clothing (Ps 22:18[19]; cf. Matt 27:35).
 - (3) Nevertheless, God rescued him from the grip of death (Ps 22:21[22]), and he vowed to proclaim God’s greatness to his “brothers,” who have become a “congregation” (22:22[23]; cf. Matt 28:10). He also declared, in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, that “the ends of the earth” and “all the families of the nations” would remember his sacrifice and victory and worship (Ps 22:27[28]; cf. Matt 28:18–20). This victorious

- one is the “Lord,” and a coming generation would proclaim “his righteousness” (Ps 22:30–31[31–32]).
- ii. Following the MT, the ESV reads Ps 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” However, the LXX reads the last part of the phrase differently: “Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of *my transgression*?” The NT authors commonly cite the LXX of Psalm 22 and were therefore likely aware that the psalmist claims himself sinful. Yet the NT authors recognize fully that only of the Christ can it be said that God rescued (Ps 22:21[22]) him who noted, “They have pierced my hands and feet” (22:16[17]). David seems to be predicting the one whom Isaiah would declare, “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).
- c. **Psalm 25**
- i. The NT does not cite Psalm 25, but what we find here is comparable to what we will see in Psalm 41, of which the NT does quote.
 - ii. David here proclaims two apparently competing realities. First, he is a sinner: “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.... For your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt for it is great.... Consider my affliction and my trouble and forgive all my sins” (vv. 7–8, 11, 18). Second, he is a covenant keeper and man of integrity: “He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.... Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you” (vv. 9–10, 20–21).
 - iii. Either forgiven sinners are here recognized as true covenant keepers and people of integrity (so Piper, *Faith in Future Grace*), or the text is speaking about (1) imputed guilt and real righteousness within the Messiah or (2) real guilt and imputed righteousness to the original King David.
- d. **Psalm 31**
- i. In Ps 31:10[11] the psalmist asserts, “For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of *my iniquity*, and my bones waste away.”
 - ii. Yet the psalmist also tags himself the “righteous” one (31:18[19]), and Jesus identifies this psalmist with himself by citing Ps 31:5[6] on the cross: “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46).
 - iii. Psalm 32 distinguishes between the one and the many—the righteous *one* who represents before God the sins of all righteous *ones* who would be declared righteous through him.
 - (1) Paul cites Ps 32:1 in Rom 4:6–7 as portraying the doctrine of imputation—as identifying “the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works”: “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man

against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Ps 32:1–2).

- (2) At this, the psalmist echoes the voice of the “righteous *one*” from the previous psalm: “I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Ps 32:5). He later asserts, “Steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD” (Ps 32:10), and then he speaks to the righteous *ones*: “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous *ones*, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” (Ps 32:11; cf. 33:1). Clearly the psalmist’s experience has direct import for others.

e. **Psalm 38**

- i. Psalm 38 is “a Psalm of David,” and here the psalmist is feeling the weight of Yahweh’s discipline: “Your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me” (38:1[2]). Why is he experiencing this trauma?
- ii. In 38:3–4[4–5] the psalmist says, “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of *my sin*. For *my iniquities* have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.” Then in 38:18[19] he cries, “I confess *my iniquity*; I am sorry for *my sin*.”
- iii. In the midst of his affliction, he notes, “My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kind stand far off [ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν]” (38:11[LXX37:12]). All the gospel writers appear to echo this verse when describing the placement of Jesus’ closest followers at the time of his crucifixion, “And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance [Εἰστήκεισαν ... ἀπὸ μακρόθεν] watching these things” (Luke 23:49; cf. Matt 27:55; Mark 15:40).
- iv. Significantly, the psalmist notes that his foes “hate me wrongfully” and then affirms that “those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good” (Ps 38:19–20[20–21]). The psalmist here appears to identify that he is both a pursuer of good who does good and one who recognizes himself to be a sinner. Does this not adequately describe Jesus in his identification with us?

f. **Psalm 39**

- i. Psalm 39 is another “Psalm of David.” It opens with the psalmist declaring, “I said, ‘I will guard my ways, that I may *not sin* with my tongue” (Ps 39:1[2]). Later, however, we read in 39:7–8, 10–11[8–9, 11–12], “And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. ⁸ Deliver me from all *my transgressions*. Do not make me the scorn of the fool! ... ¹⁰ Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the hostility of your hand. ¹¹ When you discipline a man with rebukes *for sin*, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath!”
- ii. The NT does not cite, allude to, or echo this psalm, but it does speak of one who endured the disciplining hand of God for sin. Furthermore, Psalm 39 is framed by two psalms that the NT does cite by applying them to Christ. As such, by reading Psalm 39 in context, we may justly interpret it messianically.

g. **Psalm 40**

- i. Ps 40:12[13] reads, “For evils have encompassed me beyond number; *my iniquities* have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.”

- ii. The author of Hebrews cites Ps 40:6–8[7–9] and applies them directly to Christ (Heb 10:5–10): “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), then he added, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
 - iii. The “scroll of the book” likely refers to the Pentateuch, and we know that Jesus stressed that Moses “wrote of me” (John 5:46). The psalmist is the hoped-for deliverer, yet he identifies himself as a sinner. I suggest this is possible only because of the great exchange—our sins applied to him and his righteousness applied to us. He has so fully identified with us in our rebellion that he carries it in himself.
- h. **Psalm 41**
- i. Ps 41:4[5] asserts, “As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for *I have sinned* against you!’” The psalmist then grieves that a close friend has betrayed him, saying, “Even my close friend in whom I trust, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me” (41:9[10]).
 - ii. Within the same psalm, David declares, “But you have upheld me *because of my integrity*, and set me in your presence forever” (41:12[13]). Only in Christ do we find perfect integrity that secures God’s eternal presence matched by a declaration of sinning against God [via the imputation of our sinfulness] (cf. Psalm 25).
 - iii. Jesus quotes this psalm on the night of his last supper: “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18).
- i. **Psalm 65**
- i. In 65:2–4[3–5] we read, “O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. ³ When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. ⁴ Blessed in the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!”
 - ii. Verse 3 literally reads, “Words of iniquity prevail against me; as for our transgressions, you atone them.” Note first the switch between first person singular and third person plural. Note also that some are casting “words of iniquity” on the psalmist, which may suggest imputation of guilt, regardless of whether it is actual.
 - iii. In some way, the psalmist appears to view himself representing a larger group, so that as he bears iniquity, all people’s sins are atoned. God’s chosen *one* is blessed, and in his blessing, he and all identified with him (“we”) are satisfied with God’s goodness.
- j. **Psalm 69**
- i. Ps 69:5[6] declares, “O God, you know *my folly; the wrongs I have done* are not hidden from you.” This is then followed in vv. 7–9[8–10] by, “For it is *for your sake* that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I

have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me." On the one hand the psalmist claims sin, yet he also asserts that he is receiving God's wrath *for God's sake*.

- ii. After Jesus cleansed the temple, John 2:17 tells us that the disciples identified his act with the psalmist's words in Ps 69:9[10]. Even more, Paul identifies Jesus with the psalmist of Ps 69:9[10], when he says, "For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me'" (Rom 15:3). Later, Ps 69:21[22] reads, "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink," and this is referred to in Christ's crucifixion at Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:28–29. Here the John text is particularly interesting: "After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.'" This latter text does not appear to be a quote but a synthesis of fulfillment on 69:21[22]. Finally, we read in Ps 69:25[26], "May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents," which is then cited with regard to Judas in Acts 1:20.

4. The innocence of the Christ

- a. All of the above texts show that the NT authors had no problem applying the words of the psalmist to Christ, even when the context of those words mentioned the psalmist's sinfulness. The common pattern is for NT authors to expect readers to know the context when they cite single verses. As such, I believe the best way to understand the NT use of the Psalms is that the NT authors saw the Christ as fully identifying himself with his people in their sin, while also fully recognizing his own innocence and praying to God in light of this. "By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3). "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13).
- b. In 2 Sam 22:21, David writes, "The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me." Furthermore, at the end of the psalm, in response to Yahweh's great deliverance, he writes, "For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever" (2 Sam 22:49–50). Paul cites this latter text in Rom 15:8–9, when he declares: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.'" Paul identifies the figure in 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) as the Christ. He is the one who stands before the Lord blameless.
- c. Earlier in the book, Hannah declares, "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed" (1 Sam 2:9–10). Later the character of this anointed one is then unpacked: "And I will raise up a *faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind*. And I will build him a sure house, and it shall go in and out before my anointed forever"

(2:35). Clearly, the book of Samuel expects the anointed deliver to be one faithful to God, and the story of David's rise and fall pushes the reader to look ahead to someone other than David who would sing God's praises to the nations. This person is the Christ.⁶

IX. The Portrait of Yahweh in the Psalms

A. Yahweh Stands in Focus through the Doxologies Concluding Each "Book":

1. *Book 1: Ps. 41:13*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. Cf. 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3.
2. *Book 2: Ps. 72:18–19*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!
3. *Book 3: Ps. 89:52*. Blessed be Yahweh forever! Amen and Amen.
4. *Book 4: Ps. 106:48*. Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise Yah(weh)!
5. *Book 5: Pss. 146–150*. Praise Yah(weh)! (Pss. 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6)
 - *Ps. 148: 5, 13*. Let them praise the name of Yahweh! For he commanded and they were created.... Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.

B. Overview of Usage of the Name and Titles of God:

1. "The LORD" = *Yahweh* (695x); *Yah* (43x)
2. "God" = *Elohim* (365x); *El* (77x); *Eloah* (1x)⁷
3. "Lord, Sovereign" = *Adonai* (67x)
4. "Most High" = *Elyon* (22x); *Shaddai* (2x)
5. "LORD Almighty/of hosts" = *Yahweh Sabaoth* (13x)
6. "My king and my God" = First title other than Yahweh or Elohim (Ps. 52; cf. 2:4; see also "Yahweh reigns" in Pss. 24; 29; 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99)

Fig. 18.4. Some Names or Titles of God in the Old Testament

Name/Title	Significance
<i>Elohim</i> "God"	Names the transcendent Creator of all that exists (Gen. 1:1)

⁶ The psalmist in 2 Samuel 22 asserts that God has judged him *according to* and not *on the basis of* his righteousness (2 Sam 22:21), which is exactly how Paul says God will assess at the final judgment (Rom 2:6). The psalmist sets forth the principle of God's action as follows: "With the faithful you show yourself faithful; with the blameless you show yourself blameless; with the purified you deal purely; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous" (22:26–27). Earlier, Hannah had said something similar: "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail" (1 Sam 2:9). And again, Yahweh declared to Eli through the man of God, "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (2:30). The psalmist in 2 Samuel 22 notes that the righteousness according to which God judges is not a self-exalting one but a God-exalting and God-dependent one: "You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. . . . He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. . . . This God is my strong refuge and has made my way blameless" (2 Sam 22:28, 31, 33). Figures like Noah (Gen 6:9) and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3) are tagged "righteous," and Job asserts his integrity before God (ch. 31; cf. 2:3). With this, the fact that Peter stresses, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet 5:5) highlights that true humility before God is possible. Nevertheless, the whole context of Samuel and the Psalter suggests we are referring to a level of integrity that no human other than Christ enjoyed. David's hands, while washed, had been dirty, whereas the Christ's hands were never dirty (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

⁷ In light of the employment of *Elohim* for the Anointed King in Ps 45:6–7 (cf. Heb 1:8–9), the title *Elohim* may be intentionally blurry (at least within the Sons of Korah psalms in Pss 42–49), allowing for a dual referent—both Yahweh and his anointed royal Son.

<i>El-Elyon</i> “God Most High”	Indicates God’s superior position above all the other gods of the nations (Gen. 14:18–20)
<i>Yahweh</i> “the LORD”	Personal name of God; names the ever existent, creator & sustainer of all things (Exod. 3:14–15)
<i>Adonai</i> “Lord, Master, Sovereign”	Reveals God as owner and master of all creation (Gen. 15:2; Josh. 3:11)
<i>El-Shaddai</i> “God Almighty”	Recalls God’s power in creating & sustaining life (Gen. 17:1)
<i>El-Olam</i> “God Everlasting”	Emphasizes God’s immensity and eternity (Gen. 21:33)
<i>El-Roeh</i> “God, the One Who Sees”	Reveals God’s beneficent omniscience, the God who sees the needs of his people & cares enough to respond with help & deliverance (Gen. 16:13)
<i>El Elohe Israel</i> “God, the God of Israel”	Attests God’s sovereignty & providential watch and care over Israel as his elect people (Gen. 33:19–20)
<i>Yahweh-Yireh</i> “the LORD Our Provision”	Witnesses to God’s ability to sustain the faithful in trial and testing (Gen. 22:13–14)
<i>Yahweh-Sabaoth</i> “the LORD of Hosts”	Designates God as the creator & leader of the angelic armies of heaven (1 Sam. 1:11; 17:45)
Adapted from John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, <i>Old Testament Today</i> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 73.	

C. Yahweh in the Introduction (Pss 1–2):

1. Ps. 1. Yahweh, the good **Guide, Satisfier, and Judge**, who preserves and flourishes those faithful to his Law but who allows the wicked to perish.
2. Ps. 2. Yahweh, the great **Sovereign** over all and **Treasure** of all who take refuge in him—the One who deserves worldwide homage and who promises the destruction of his enemies and worldwide dominion to his earthly king.

D. Yahweh in the Conclusion (Pss 146–150):

1. Ps. 146. Yahweh, the great **Creator** of all and **Keeper** of the downtrodden—the constant one, who brings to ruin the way of the wicked and who will reign supreme forever.
2. Ps. 147. Yahweh, the great **Architect, Overseer, and Provider** of the universe—*our* God, who takes special care of those to whom he reveals his will and who look to him for help.
3. Ps. 148. Yahweh, the **Supreme One**, whose *name* is worthy of praise in all creation because through him all things were created and because he is exalted over all as realized through the saving work of his messianic king (148:14; cf. 1 Sam 2:10).
4. Ps. 149. Yahweh, the **great King**, who saved a humble people for his own pleasure and their good!
5. Ps. 150. Yahweh, **God over all** (in heaven and on earth, 150:1), whose actions and person (150:2) are worthy of praise from everything that has breath!

E. Yahweh in the Body—An Overview:

1. The majesty of God’s *name* is seen in the way he’s made the skies and humanity.
 - Ps. 8:1, 3, 5. O **Yahweh**, our **Lord**, how majestic is your **name** in all the earth... your heavens, the work of your fingers... You...crowned [man] with glory and honor.
2. God’s glorious deeds of steadfast love, faithfulness, and power demand that remnant and rebel alike praise his *name*.
 - Ps. 9:1–2. I will give thanks to **Yahweh** with my whole heart; I will recount all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your **name**, O **Most High**.
 - Ps. 66:1–4. Shout for joy to **God**, all the earth; sing the glory of his **name**; give to him glorious praise! Say to **God**, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your **name**.”

- Ps. 92:1–2, 4–5. It is good to give thanks to **Yahweh**, to sing praises to your **name**, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night... For you, O **Yahweh**, have made me glad by your work... How great are your works, O **Yahweh**!
- 3. God's **name** is to be praised, for he is the deliver of the righteous and hears the cries of the needy.
 - Ps. 9:9–10. **Yahweh** is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your **name** put their trust in you, for you, O **Yahweh**, have not forsaken those who seek you.
 - Ps. 68:1, 3–4, 32, 34. **God** shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered... But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before **God**... Sing to **God**, sing praises to his **name**... his **name** is **Yahweh**; exult before him!... O kingdoms of the earth, sing to **God**; sing praises to the **Lord**... Ascribe power to **God**, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.
 - Ps. 69:19, 29–30, 32–36. You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you... let your salvation, O **God**, set me on high! I will praise the **name** of **God** with a song... When the humble see [my salvation] they will be glad; you who seek **God**, let your hearts revive. For **Yahweh** hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners. Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. For **God** will save Zion...and those who love his name shall dwell in it.
- 4. God's name deserves sustained, eternal praise, for he is God and King, incomparable in his perfections and working amazing reversals.
 - Ps. 113. Praise **Yahweh**!...praise the **name** of **Yahweh**! Blessed be the **name** of **Yahweh** from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the **name** of **Yahweh** is to be praised! **Yahweh** is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like **Yahweh** our **God**, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust...to make them sit with princes... He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise **Yahweh**!
 - Ps. 145. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your **name** forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your **name** forever and ever. Great is **Yahweh**, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts... **Yahweh** is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **Yahweh** is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made... Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom...[**Yahweh** is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.] **Yahweh** upholds all who are falling... **Yahweh** is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. **Yahweh** is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth... **Yahweh** preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of **Yahweh**, and let all flesh bless his holy **name** forever and ever.

F. Summary:

1. *The Truth*. In the Psalms, Yahweh reigns supreme over all creation, from the placement of galaxies (Pss. 8:3; 19:1) to the growth of grass (104:14), from sea breezes (148:8) to the flight of birds (78:28), from the establishment of nations (22:28) to the last breath of individuals (104:29). Yahweh is always faithful and just (89:8, 14), guides through his instruction (1, 19, 119), responds to the pleas and laments of the righteous (6:9; 66:19), and will faithfully vindicate those who seek refuge in him under the rule of his Messiah (2:2, 12; 28:8). His Sovereignty over all demands praise, for he is the Guide, Satisfier, Judge, Sovereign, Treasure, Creator, Keeper, Architect, Overseer, Provider, Supreme One, Great King, and God over all.
2. *The Conflict*. In the Psalms, Yahweh alone is God, and his Word provides the only path for life. Nevertheless, the sustained voice through the Psalms witness that in this world God's supremacy is constantly in dispute. Mays noted (*Psalms*, 34):

Because it is the reign of God whose way in the world is being worked out through one people and one presence and one king and a particular kind of human conduct, the rule encounters the opposition of nations and rulers and people whose gods and power and autonomy are denied by the reign of the Lord.

There is not a psalm that does not in some way or other reflect some dimension of this fundamental conflict.

3. *The Hope.*
 - a. While the presence and promises of God are constantly called into question in life, the Psalms testify to the truth that there is one God and that he is for all who take refuge in him through his Messiah (2:12). Whether from an individual or a community, whether through lament, thanksgiving, or joyous song, the daily-life confessions of the psalmists declare that Yahweh “lives, speaks, acts, helps, sees, hears, answers and saves” (House, *Old Testament Theology*, 407). No other god does any of the things in the Psalms; therefore, Yahweh alone is shown to be God who rules over his creation, ultimately through his Messianic king.
 - b. We must ever remember that such gracious activities from God for his own are just and good only because of the wondrous substitutionary, sacrificial work of Jesus on our behalf (Rom. 3:23–26). May our hearts be moved to great praise, for God is for us in Christ; he listens, and he will save. Praise the LORD!

X. Summary: Sovereign Yahweh will establish his global reign over his new creation through his Anointed King, who will triumph over curse, death, and enemies by means of great tribulation, with the result that the wicked will perish, those finding refuge in him will flourish, lament will end, and praise to Yahweh will endure forever.

XI. Guided Reading for the Psalms: NOTE: As you read through the “key Psalms,” meditate on the goodness of God and allow yourself to be refreshed by him. Seek his face, and he will be found.

A. Key Psalms: 1–2, 8, 19, 22–24, 42–43, 51, 89, 95–99, 119, 136, 145

B. Questions:

1. What role did the Psalter serve in the worship of the second temple and synagogues and how many “books” make up the Psalter?
2. Along with Psalm 1:2, we find the challenge to “meditate on the law day and night” only at one other place in the Bible. Using the cross-references, identify this place and answer why the placement of these two injunctions is significant within the three-part structure of the Hebrew Bible.
3. Viewed by many interpreters as one psalm, Psalms 1–2 stand as the introduction to the whole Psalter, which itself operates as the introduction to the Writings, focused on “life in the covenant.” In Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–8 we are told that Israel’s life in the covenant will be sustained and their witness to the world will be realized as they carry out the Law of God, which is the focus of Psalm 1. In this light, what is significant about the response of the nations in Psalm 2, and what does it tell us about the effectiveness of Israel’s witness?
4. In one sentence, summarize the message of Psalm 19 in your own words.
5. Which of the “key psalms” did Jesus quote during his execution (see Matt 27:46 // Mark 15:34)?
6. Which of the “key psalms” appears to be a meditation on Genesis 1, focusing on the glory of God in his world and the purpose of humanity in general and the Christ in particular to reflect God’s supremacy in all things?
7. Which of the “key psalms” celebrates God’s covenant with David?
8. Which of the “key psalms” is clearly a psalm of “thanksgiving” to Yahweh, whose “steadfast love endures forever”?
9. Which two of the “key psalms” (likely one psalm originally) do we find the psalmist preaching to himself with the following words? “Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” This same refrain shows up in the last verse of each psalm.

10. Perhaps the most beloved of all the psalms, Psalm 23 ends with the psalmist’s testimony that he plans to dwell in the house of Yahweh forever (Ps 23:6). Keeping in mind that the placement of the specific psalms in the Psalter appears to be quite intentional, which of the “key psalms” clarifies the type of person who can do such a thing? That is, what psalm answers, “Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh” and enjoy the presence of the returning “King of glory”? Once you know the psalm, detail the psalmist’s answer to his own question.
11. “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” In what psalms are these words found?
12. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” In what psalm are these words found? In what context does the psalm title suggest these words arose?
13. “The rules of Yahweh are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings from the honeycomb.” In what psalms are these words found?
14. “Oh sing to Yahweh a new song; sing to Yahweh, all the earth! Sing to Yahweh, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the people! For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared about all gods.” In what psalm are these words found?
15. Which of the “key psalms” presents itself as meditation on the name of God and so recalls numerous characteristics of Yahweh revealed to mankind through his deeds?