

LECTURE 19: PSALMS
“The God who rules through his Messiah”
 Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

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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” [*Dauid 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 hēmōn dia pneumatos hagiou stomatos Dauid paidos sou*).
 - d. The use of Ps. 95:7–11 in Heb. 4:7 asserts that Ps. 95:7–11 came “through David” (*en Dauid*), 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 canonicaler(s) finalized the Psalter

² The Septuagint (LXX) expands the list of Davidic psalms by fourteen; see Bruegemann, “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).
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.
5. The Psalms move from lament to praise and appear to follow an overarching pattern from kingdom crisis to kingdom restoration and hope, 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.
6. The OT saints were reading at least some psalms as messianic music:
 - a. Zech 9:10 applies Ps 72:9 to the eschatological hope of the royal deliverer.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Isa 55:3 may draw on Ps 89:28[29] when stressing how God will keep his faithfulness to 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 rise and establishment)	
Book 3	Pss 73–89	Almost no Davidic [Doxology: 89:52] (Kingdom division and rebellion)	
Book 4	Pss 90–106	Almost no Davidic [Doxology: 106:48] (Kingdom demise: Exile, separation, renewed focus)	

Book 5	Pss 107–145	Higher number of Davidic (Kingdom restoration and hope)	
	Pss 146–150	Worshipping on account of the Messiah (Kingdom Praise)	Concl

IV. 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 dissatisfaction 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 dissatisfaction 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 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. Approaching the Psalms through Genre

A. History of Interpretation:

1. It has long been recognized that the psalmists used various literary forms as templates for communicating with God.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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]).

6. 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

Genre	Psalm
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., <i>What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About</i> , 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

Psalm 6	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.	

- b. Examples of NT usage:
 - i. 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].)
 - ii. 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].)
 - iii. John 2:17. His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (Cf. Ps 69:9[10].)
 - iv. 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].)
 - v. 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.)
 - vi. 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.

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

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:

- i. 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].)
 - ii. 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 Misery reported
⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.	Appeal for others to praise God
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.	Rescue announced
O LORD, I will give thanks to you forever!	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

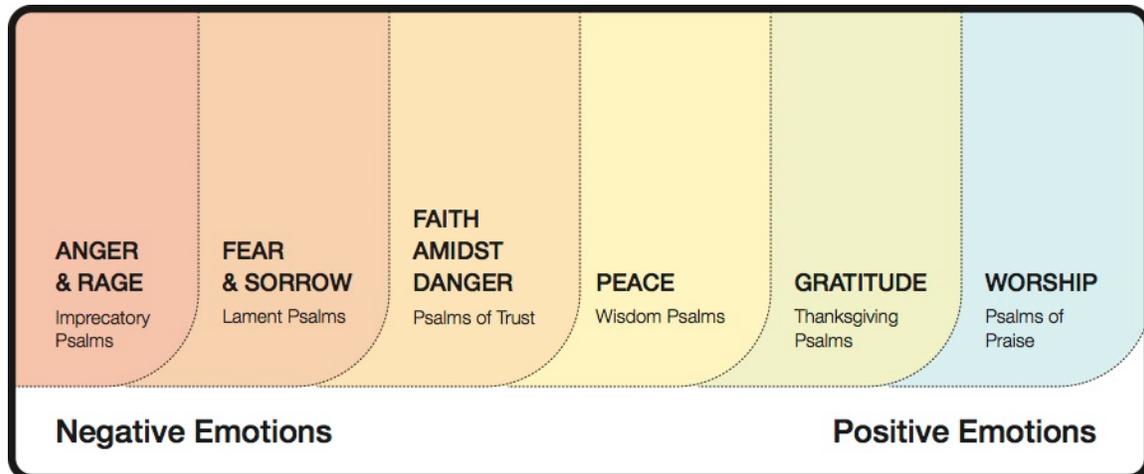
- a. Structure (SRS):
 - i. Summons to praise
 - ii. Reason for praise
 - iii. Summons to praise repeated

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.