

10 WEEKS IN THE
PSALMS



KYLE DONN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4** INTRO TO PSALMS
- 16** PSALMS 1 & 2
- 24** PSALMS FROM BOOK 1
- 31** PSALMS FROM BOOK 2
- 35** PSALMS FROM BOOK 3
- 40** PSALMS 89 & 90
- 45** PSALMS FROM BOOK 4
- 50** PSALMS FROM BOOK 5
- 55** PSALM 119
- 59** DOXOLOGY
- 64** APPENDIX

10 WEEKS IN THE
PSALMS

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WEEK 1

INTRO TO PSALMS

WEEK 1 – INTRO TO PSALMS

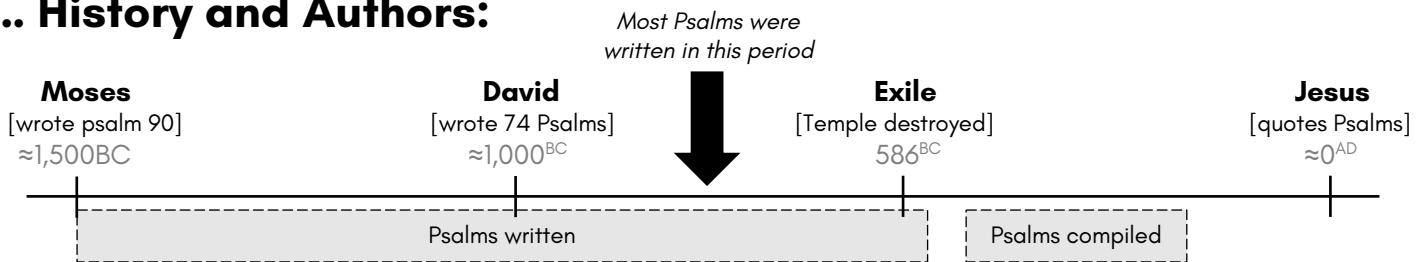
... What does the word “Psalm” mean?

Hebrew - *mizmôr* (מִזְמוֹר)... Literally means “a melody.”

English - derived from the Greek *psallo* (ψάλλω)... Literally means “to pluck” (i.e. an instrument).

In Hebrew, the ‘Book of Psalms’ is called ***The Tehillim***, which means ‘Praise Songs.’
Psalms is the Hebrew Hymnbook.

... History and Authors:



Authors include Israel’s priests, worship leaders, kings, and prophets. (*Biographies on 64-65*).

Psalms had varying purposes - some were meant to be:

- Sung by choirs
- Prayed with your family at home
- Sung on special occasions or days of the week

Not all Psalms made it into *The Tehillim* - King Solomon alone wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32).

There were several collections of Psalms before someone(s) curated the 150 we have today.

They were organized into a five-part book that tells one cohesive story.

King David is the largest contributor, having written at least 75 (50%) of the psalms.

... Organization & Structure:

150 of Israel’s beloved Psalms were organized into 5 books... kind of like the ‘*Torah*.’

‘**The Torah**’ is the first 5 books of the Bible. Literally means ‘Law’ or ‘Instruction.’

-- Sometimes called **The ‘Pentateuch.’** Literally means “Five Books.”

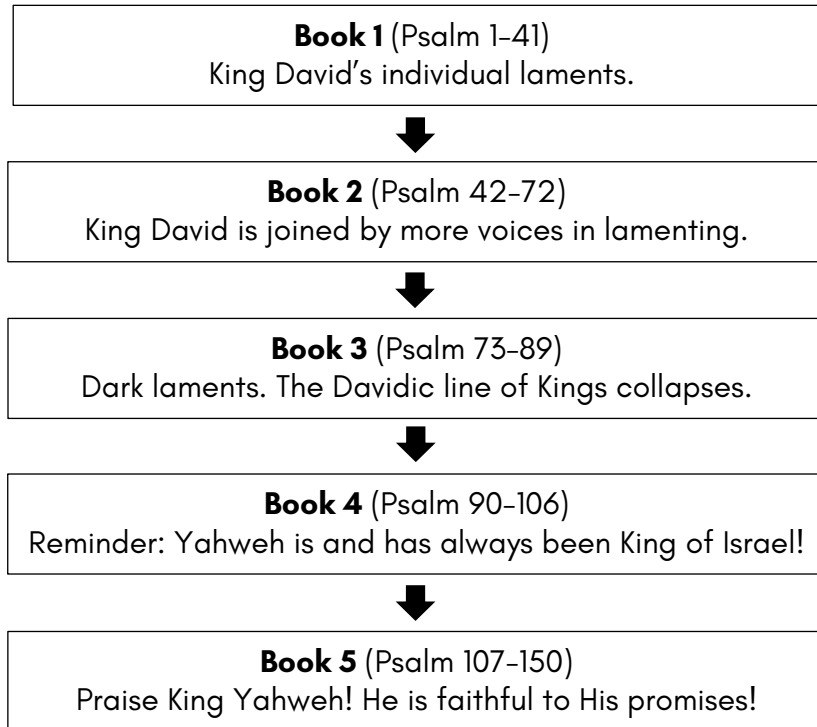
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy = God’s Law and God’s Story.

The Psalms are **5 books that parallel the Torah** - and teach us to delight in God’s Law and Story.

... Organization & Structure (continued):

Watch: 'How To Read The Bible: The Book of Psalms' by The Bible Project

The 5-Part Story of the Psalms:



The major division between books 3 and 4:

Book 1: Psalm 1-41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composed primarily with <i>individual lament</i> Psalms. • Focus is on King David and God's covenant to keep his line on the throne. • Ends with the unraveling of the Davidic line of kings. • Dominated with author designations and musical genres in their superscript.
Book 2: Psalm 42-72	
Book 3: Psalm 73-89	
Book 4: Psalm 90-106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly <i>communal praise</i> and thanksgiving psalms. • David is no longer called King, but Yahweh is emphasized repeatedly as King! • Moves from the 'failed' Davidic line to Yahweh's dominion.
Book 5: Psalm 107-150	

Concluding Doxologies:

The transitional "seam" between all 5 books is a *similar concluding refrain*.

Book 1	Psalm 41:13
Book 2	Psalm 72:18-19
Book 3	Psalm 89:52
Book 4	Psalm 106:48
Book 5	Psalm 145-150

... Why does it matter?

1

We can meet the Living God in the Psalms.ⁱ

- The Jerusalem Temple was the center of Jewish Life... a new "Garden of Eden."
- It was a place to meet with the living God and sing about Him and all He'd done.
- The Temple was destroyed in 586^{BC} by the Babylonians, who took the Jews into captivity.
- The Psalms were composed sometime during or after Israel's 70-year exile in Babylon.
- Jews could "enter" the Psalms to meet with God and sing the story of Him and His works.
- It focuses a lot on their "golden era" - and anticipates another Davidic King. A Messiah.
- It starts with the Garden-Temple of Eden (Ps. 1) and ends with God's Kingship (Ps. 146-150).

2

We need to know the authors and their stories.

- Reading a Psalm is like peering into the soul of an ancient Believer.
- The more you know the author and their story, the more you'll see and understand.
- The ***superscript*** can tell us what the author was experiencing (see page 65).
- If a superscript refers to a specific Bible story, read it! (Ex. *Psalm 3 is about 2 Sam. 15-18*).
- It's a cycle: The more you understand the Bible's story, the more you'll understand the Psalms, and the more you understand about the Psalms, the more you'll understand the Bible.

3

We should read the Psalms in order.

- It mimics the Torah's 5-book structure.
- A "compiler" (or "compilers") intentionally placed each Psalm in the place it appears.
- **The Psalms tells one unified story.**
- So, we should read Psalms in order, slowly, thoughtfully, over and over. Just like the Torah.

4

The Psalms teach us about Jesus.

- The Tehillim (Psalms) is the **most-quoted book of the Bible by Jesus.**
- The resurrected Jesus said, "[I told you] that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" - Luke 24:44.
- Jesus believed many Psalms were about Him and His Kingdom (especially Ps. 2, 16, 22, 110, 118).
- Jesus quoted Psalm 22 and 31 on the Cross.
- From childhood. Jesus would've sang and studied the Psalms daily, memorizing many.
- Jesus probably sang Psalm 118 the night he was betrayed and arrested (Mt. 26:30).
- A deeper understanding of the Psalms will give us a deeper sense of who Jesus Christ is as God, Savior, Prophet, Priest, and King.

... What is Poetic Literature?

Watch: 'How to Read Biblical Poetry' by The Bible Project

Some facts about Biblical Poetry:ⁱ

- 30% of the Bible is Poetry – and most of God’s speech in the Bible is represented as poetry.
- Poetry’s purpose is to ignite the imagination through the experience of verbal art.
- Poetry is marked by English translators with ***Indentation***.

Poetic literature differs from “Narrative” (event-telling) literature... but can still tell about events.

EXAMPLE

Red Sea Crossing in Narrative Form

Exodus 14:21-22

“The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.”

Red Sea Crossing in Poetry Form

Exodus 15:8

“At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the surging waters stood up in a heap; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.”

ii

Two terms found in Biblical Poetry you might come across:

1. **“Selah”** – Most likely “Rest” or “Pause” or “Think on that.” – *Appears 71 times in Psalms.*
2. **“Hallelujah”** – Means “Praise Yahweh.” (Praise = “*hā-lāl*” + Yahweh (shortened) = “*Jah*”). It’s a phrase of triumphant exaltation in the Person of God.

Three important literary devices:

1. **Acrostic** – A poem in which the first letter of each stanza spells out the alphabet (or a word or message, like the song ‘L.O.V.E.’ by Nat “King” Cole). Hebrew Acrostics typically spell out the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters).
2. **Strophe** – (pronounced ‘*Stroe-Fee*’). A type of poem in which themes recur, but are not organized in an arch (as with chiasms). They are more like modern songs which have choruses (refrains) and verses which explore the same theme but using different verbiage.
3. **Chiasm** – A major device in Hebrew Poetry. Structures the entire poem by mirroring terms and concepts into an Arch-shape. This is the height of Hebrew poetic beauty. A well-structured chiasm doesn’t just sound nice to the ears, but once one starts to recognize chiasms, the arch will evoke a deeply satisfying effect on the reader.

CHIASMS EXPLAINED

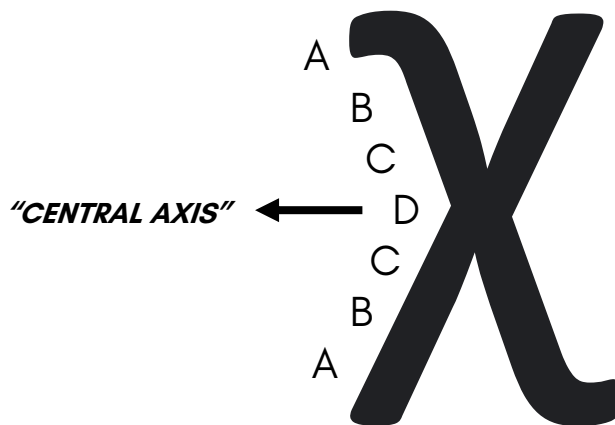
An A-B-C-B-A chiastic structure is perhaps the simplest, but the chiastic structure of other Psalms may be much more intricate and complicated.

Examples of MIRRORED CONCEPTS in Chiasms:

Psalm 23	Psalm 11
A - Security in YHWH - vs 1 B - Purposeful renewal - vs 2-3 C - Need for rescue - vs 4a D - How to wait for rescue - vs 4b C - YHWH's ability to rescue - vs 5a B - Purposeful renewal - vs 5b A - Security in YHWH - vs 6	A - Refuge in God's presence - vs 1a B - David should flee - vs 1b C - Wicked against the upright - vs 2 D - Destructible Foundations - vs 3 D - Indestructible Foundations - vs 4a C - God against the wicked - vs 4b-5 B - The wicked should flee - vs 6 A - The upright in God's presence - vs 7

You can see Chiasms have *literary shape*. Psalms are more than flat words. Psalms have a *shape*.

The word "chiasm" is derived from the Greek letter 'X' which is pronounced "chi" (kī). This is derivative of their shape.



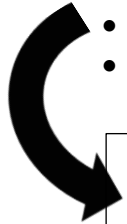
The central idea or "axis"

Often, the "shape" of a Psalm will alert us to the *central idea* or "axis" of the Psalmist's thoughts. In the case of Psalm 23, the central idea is "You are with me" (vs 4) and it helps the reader understand exactly how King David could have so much peace amid needing rescue. Sometimes it's the Psalmists big "aha!" moment. You could say that the central axis acts like a Psalm's hinge or key.

...5 TOOLS FOR UNLOCKING THE PSALMS

1 SUPERSCRPTIONS

- Superscriptions are the words that appear just below the Psalm number.
- These words are actually there in the Hebrew.
- Check out the opening of Psalm 3 -



Psalm 3
A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

¹ O YAHWEH, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!

² Many are saying of me,
God will not deliver him." *Selah*

Who is the author? _____

What Bible reference corresponds to this superscript? _____

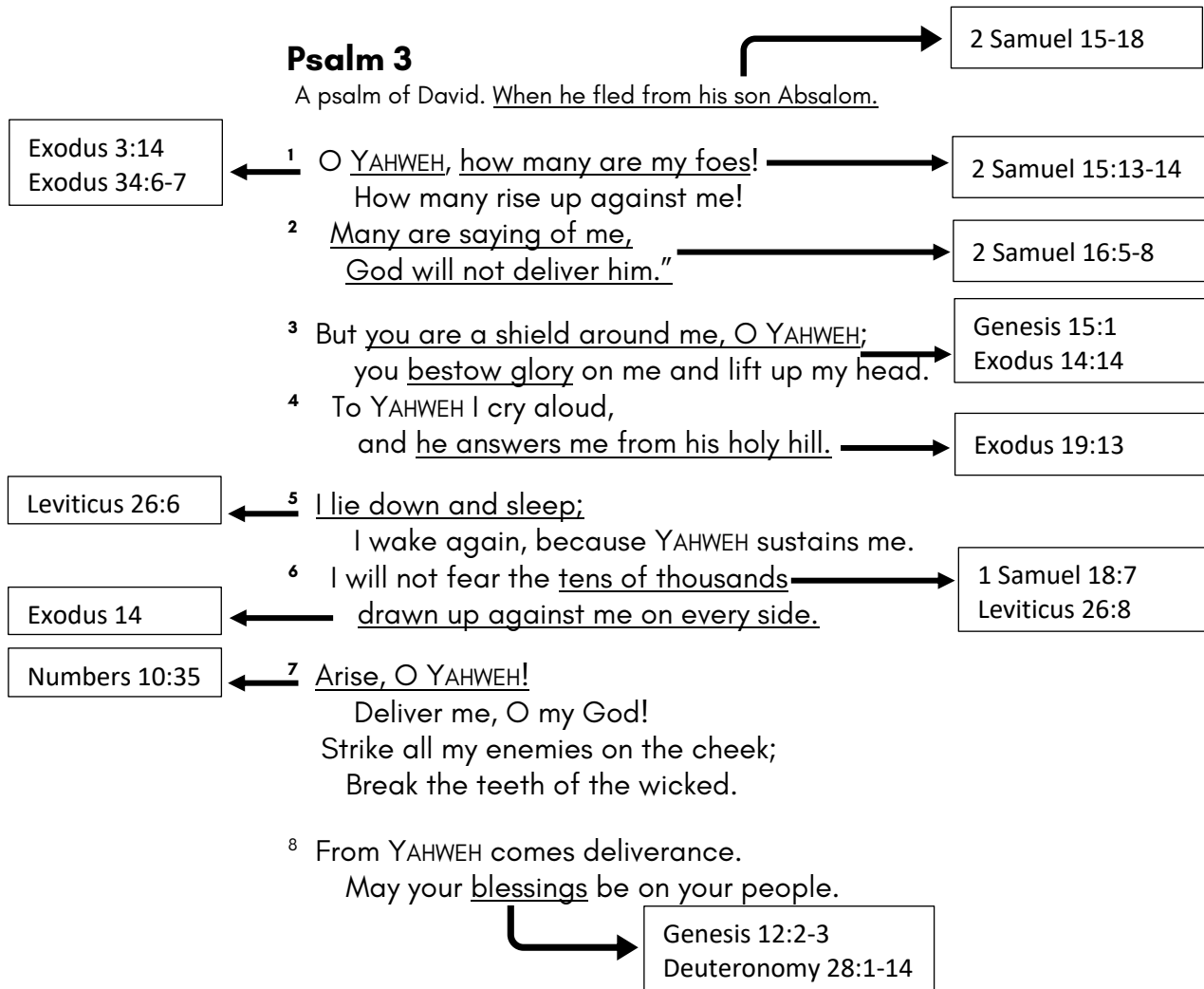
What is the situation? _____

How was David probably feeling? _____

FACT:
English Translators typically use "The LORD" in place of God's personal name: *Yahweh*.

2 CROSS-REFERENCES

- Cross references are words/ phrases/ concepts that “hyperlink” to another Bible text.
- Knowing the cross references typically helps you see a Psalm more clearly.
- Check out these cross references in Psalm 3 -



What could these cross-references be saying?

- David starts by using God’s personal name - Yahweh - which God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3 & 34.
- This text seems to have a LOT of “hyperlinks” to the Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) - Especially the ‘Red Sea Story’ in Exodus 14.
- Perhaps David feels his current situation is like when the Israelites were surrounded at the red sea.
- David is asking God to bless him like He blessed his ancestors (Gen. 12:2-3; Deut. 28:1-14; Lev. 26).
- David says the same exact phrase that Moses would say before going into battle: “Arise, O Yahweh!” (Num. 10:35).
- David is resting in God’s promise to his ancestors: “You shall lie down and none shall make you afraid” (Lev. 26:6).
- **Psalm 3 is a fascinating prayer! It’s clear that David knew the Torah very well (Deut. 17:18-20)!**

3

REPEATED WORDS AND IDEAS

- Highlighting related words or phrases can help the reader better see what the Psalmist is communicating. It often helps unlock chiasms also (which we'll see on page 14).
- Check out some of the repeated words and ideas in Psalm 3 –

Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

- ¹ O **YAHWEH**, how **many** are my foes!
How **many rise up against me!**
- ² **Many** are saying of me,
God will not **deliver** him." *Selah*
- ³ But you are a shield **around me**, O **YAHWEH**;
you bestow glory on me and **lift up my head.**
- ⁴ To **YAHWEH** I cry aloud,
and he answers me from his holy hill. *Selah*
- ⁵ I lie down and **sleep**;
I wake again, because **YAHWEH** sustains me.
- ⁶ I will **not fear** the **tens of thousands**
drawn up **against me on every side.**
- ⁷ **Arise**, O **YAHWEH!**
Deliver me, O my God!
Strike all my enemies on the cheek;
Break the teeth of the wicked.
- ⁸ From **YAHWEH** comes **deliverance.**
May your blessings be on your people. *Selah*

- **YAHWEH (OR THE LORD)**
- **"Many" / "Tens of thousands"**
- **"Rise Up" / "Arise"**
- **Surrounded by people who are against me**
- **"Deliver" me**
- **Lift my head/ strike my enemies heads**
- **Sleep/ Rest (Selah) / No fear**

What might the repetition of these words communicating?

The repeated words paint the picture of this Psalm. King David feels **trapped** – like **the odds are stacked against him**. He needs and trusts **YAHWEH** to **arise** and **deliver him** – to **lift his head and beat his enemies**. He's so confident in Yahweh that he can **rest easy**.

4 COUPLETS (or Parallelisms)

Pairs of lines - the first line makes a statement, and the second line develops it in some way. This is the most recognizable aspect of Hebrew Poetry. The 4 main kinds of couplets are:

- **Completing** or "**Synonymous**" - The second line imitates the thought in the first.
- **Deepening** or "**Synthetic**" - The second line adds to the first with more detail or "color."
- **Contrasting** or "**Antithetic**" - The second line is opposite the first.
- **Grammatical** or "**Lexical**" - The lines are related in some grammatical way.

Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

<p>¹ O YAHWEH, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!</p>	<p>Completing (synonymous)</p>
<p>² Many are saying of me, God will not deliver him." <i>Selah</i></p>	<p>Deepening (synthetic)</p>
<p>³ But you are a shield around me, O YAHWEH; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.</p>	<p>Contrasting (antithetic)</p>
<p>⁴ To YAHWEH I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. <i>Selah</i></p>	<p>Deepening (synthetic)</p>
<p>⁵ I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because YAHWEH sustains me.</p>	<p>Contrasting (antithetic)</p>
<p>⁶ I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.</p>	<p>Deepening (synthetic)</p>
<p>⁷ Arise, O YAHWEH! Deliver me, O my God!</p>	<p>Completing (synonymous)</p>
<p>Strike all my enemies on the cheek; Break the teeth of the wicked.</p>	<p>Deepening (synthetic)</p>
<p>⁸ From YAHWEH comes deliverance. May your blessings be on your people. <i>Selah</i></p>	<p>Contrasting (antithetic)</p>

Special Couplets you might run into throughout the Psalms:

"Refrain" - A refrain is a couplet or line that is repeated multiple times in the same poem.

- *Example:* In Psalm 136, the line "His steadfast love endures forever" is repeated at the end of every verse (26 times).

"Inclusio" - When a poem is opened and closed with a similar couplet or line.

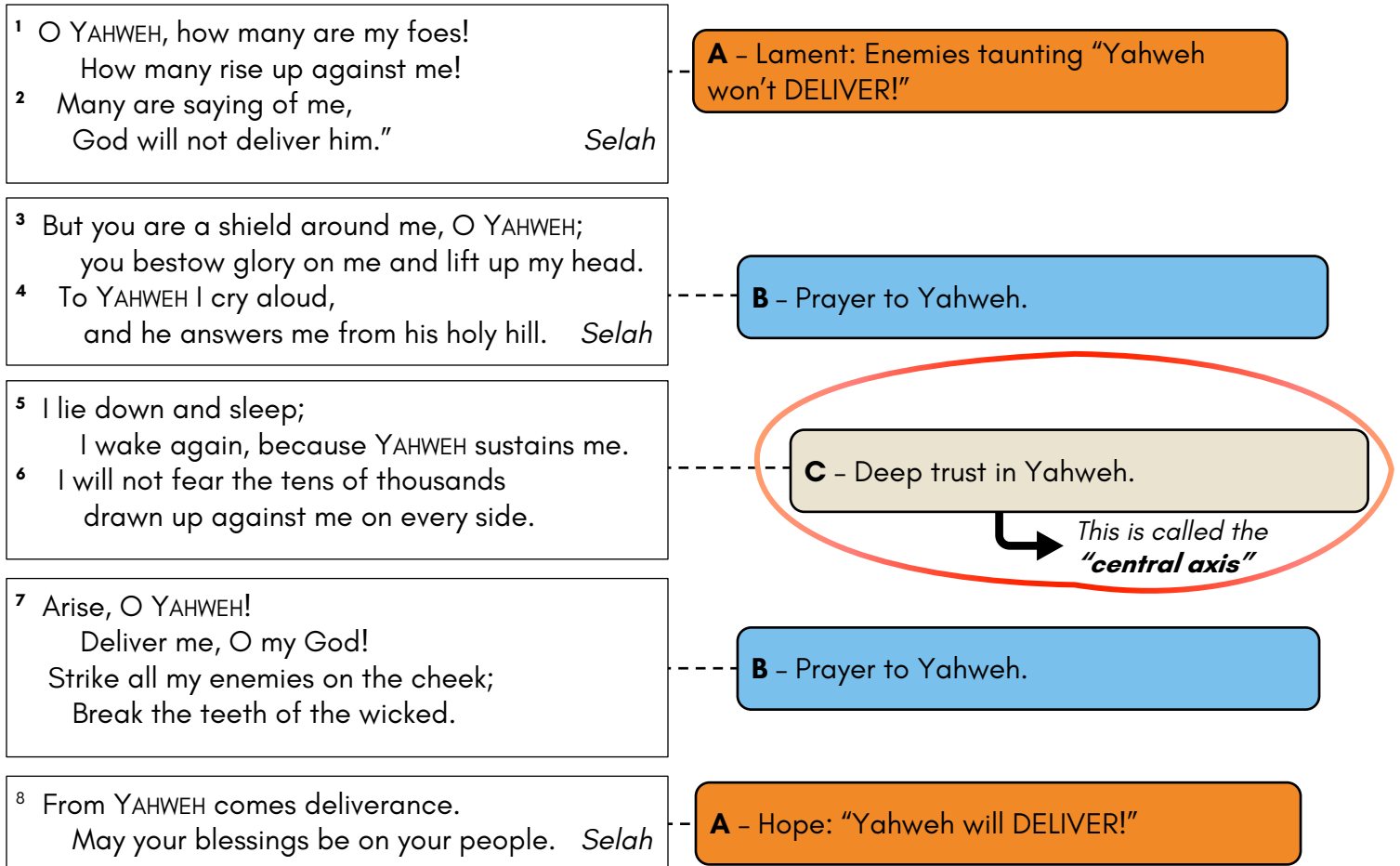
- *Example:* Psalm 118 opens and closes with the same couplet: "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever."

5 CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

A **Chiasm** is when a mirrored pattern of thoughts **comes together around one core idea** (called the “central axis”) that reinforces the main point of the poem. You can often uncover a chiasm by summarizing blocks of thought. Again, let’s look at this in Psalm 3 –

Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.



What does the “Central Axis” say about this Psalm?

Psalm 3 poetically retells the story of when King David fled from his son, Absalom – who started a coup and ran his father out of his own palace and capital city (2 Sam. 15-18). David had run from his wicked predecessor, Saul, and now he’s on the run again. However, in this Psalm, David moves from NEAR-DESPAIR (A¹) to HOPE (A²). How did he get there? The central axis (vs 5-6) shows the key: David has an unequivocal trust in Yahweh – such that he says, ‘I can sleep easy because I know that Yahweh is my sustainer and protector.’ David can wake with hope each day, because of His great God.

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 3

**Each week we'll have some questions for further reflection. We may have time to get to all of them, some of them, or none of them.*

For the first time in the Psalms, "foes" and "enemies" are mentioned in Psalm 3. How does learning that David was the author, and that this Psalm was tied to the occasion of Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-18), help you better understand the strong language and his seemingly brutal requests?

Psalm 3 is rich saturated with Torah-language (see the cross references on page 11). Do you think it was intentional? What's your theory? And why does it matter?

Psalm 3 is a simple, yet powerful chiasm. David structured his thoughts in an A-B-C-B-A shape. It takes a while to write a poem, but what about building a poem to fit a mold like this? What does it mean to you that King David poured so much time and intentionality into this poem?

Psalm 3 uses the term "Selah" at three different intervals. Read the definition of "Selah" on page 8. Why do you think the author included this term? What effect do you think taking a "pause" or "rest" throughout this Psalm has on the person reading or listening to it?

WEEK 2

PSALMS 1 & 2

THE INTRODUCTORY PSALMS

WEEK 2 – PSALMS 1 & 2

Psalms 1 and 2 are an introduction to the entire book of Psalms (even though they are included in Book 1). They introduce and explore the primary themes of the Psalms. Psalm 1 introduces the theme of submitting to God's Word (*Torah*), and Psalm 2 introduces the theme of God's king (*Messiah*). It should be noted that Psalms 1 and 2 are *not* prayers (Psalm 3 is the first prayer of the book of Psalms).

Superscript:

There is no superscript in Psalm 1 or Psalm 2. However, Acts 4:25-26 attributes authorship of Psalm 2 to King David.

Psalms 1 and 2 retell the entire Biblical Story:

Psalm 1 & 2 retell the Bible's story from the Garden of Eden (Genesis) to the final judgment of the Messiah (Revelation). The Bible is a story about God, and the great lengths He goes to in order to bring rebellious humanity back into relationship with Himself. In this way, the Bible is a story of humanity regaining what was lost – perfect peace with God, and harmony and blessing in His presence.

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 tell one unified story:

Psalm 1 presents us with a man who has been brought back to the Tree of Life – a divine and fruitful tree surrounded by life-giving rivers in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden was God's *living Temple* in Genesis. In fact, the man in Psalm 1 is himself likened to the Tree of Life (Temple), and a modern Christian reader should be reminded of John 7:37-39 and 1 Corinthians 3:16 – that in Christ, human-beings *are* God's Temple.

The man of Psalm 1 has been brought back by a different "way" – a way that is antithetical to the "way" most humans try to reach God in this life (whatever or whomever their god is). The "way" that Yahweh has provided for man to come back to God's presence is His **Law**. These themes – **The Temple** and **The Law** – are two of the primary themes in the Book of Psalms.

Psalm 2 presents us with more information on the "blessed man" of Psalm 1. Of Course, all mankind (individually and collectively) utterly fails to walk perfectly in Yahweh's "way" (Law). All of us have taken the counsel of the wicked, fallen in with sinners, and scoffed at God's Law at some point. So, the "blessed man" that Psalm 1 is talking about is an *ideal man*. A man who has perfectly walked and delighted in living a life of total submission to Yahweh's Law.

This Man is, of course, The Messiah – God's own Son, in fact! He's **a King** who will bring **God's Kingdom** – His perfect rule and justice – to earth. New Testament Christians know this "blessed man" who is also "God's King" and "God's Son" to be Jesus Christ. Indeed, all "who take refuge in [Jesus Christ]" are "blessed" (2:12). And so, Psalm 2 introduces these two additional major themes of **God's King** and **God's Kingdom**.

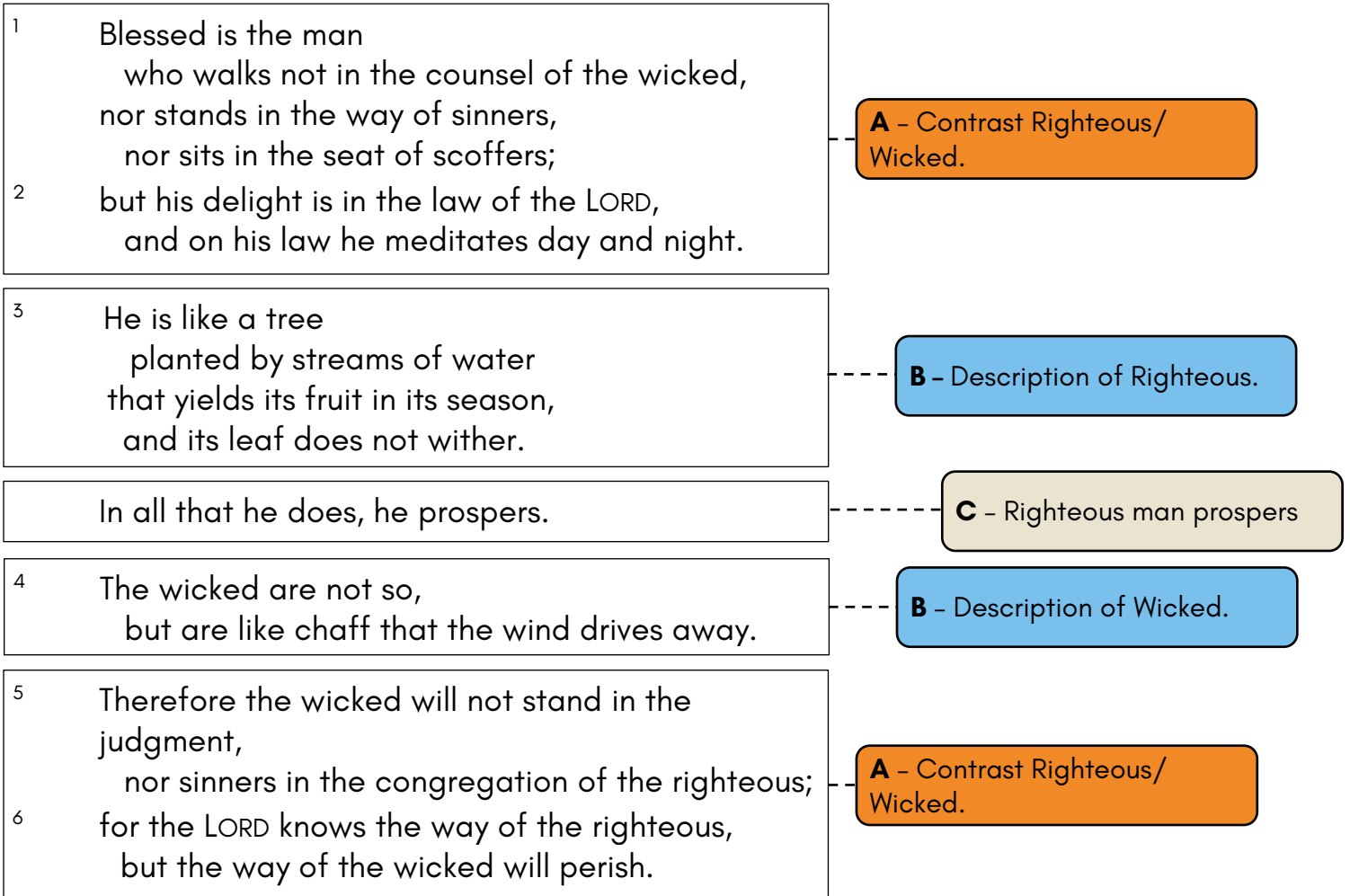
Summary of Psalm 1 and 2:

Put succinctly, Psalm 1 and 2 is the singular story of a way back to God opened by a man who is perfectly obedient to God's Law – God's anointed King and Son who will usher in God's Kingdom and bless all those who take refuge in Him.

Psalm 1

- 1 Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1



FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 1

What do you think the author of Psalm 1 was trying to communicate by saying that the righteous/ blessed man does not “walk,” “stand,” or “sit” with the wicked? Why use 3 different verbs?

When Adam and Eve sinned, God “drove them away” from the His Garden-Temple (Eden) and blocked them from “the way” to the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22-24). Psalm 1 is the story of getting back to the presence of God by a new “way.” What is that “way” as presented in Psalm 1?

The central axis of this Psalm says that the blessed/ righteous man who meditates on God’s Law day and night will ***prosper in all that he does***. Who meets the credentials of this person? And how does He “prosper in all that He does?”

In what ways do you succeed in being a Psalm 1 person? Where are you challenged? What will you do about it?

What does Psalm 1 say about the Gospel?

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."

7 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.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,

A - Nations rage and trust in each other. It's vain.

against the LORD and
against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."

B - Kings and Rulers pridefully rebel against God and His King.

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,

C - What YHWH will do to the wicked.

6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."

D - The Anointed King rules over Jerusalem.

7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

E - The Decree: "This Anointed King is YHWH's Son!"

8 Ask of me, and I will make
the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth
your possession.

D - The Son rules over the whole earth.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces
like a potter's vessel."

C - What the Son will do to the wicked.

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

B - Warning to Kings and rulers to humbly serve/ God and His King.

12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry,
and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

A - The Son's rage. People who trust in the Son are Blessed.

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 2

This Psalm has no superscription - So why do you think Acts 4:25 attributes it to David? (You might also read 2 Samuel 7:8-17).

Why do you think the ideas presented in this Psalm would "terrify" (vs 5) wicked people?

The central axis of this Psalm's chiasmic structure is verse 7 - an exuberant declaration by Yahweh that *this Anointed King is actually His Son*. What do you think this means? Why is Yahweh so excited about this?

What does it look like to "Kiss the Son," to "serve him with fear," and to "rejoice [before Him] with trembling"? After considering what these look like, consider whether you do or do not do these things.

WEEK 3

PSALMS FROM BOOK 1

Psalms 1-41

WEEK 3 – PSALMS FROM BOOK 1

Book 1 is the story of King David’s distress punctuated by his confidence in God (e.g., 9; 11; 16; 18). This punctuation of confidence in God is struck especially in the Book’s conclusion (Psalm 40–41). And so, Book 1 is a journey with Israel’s “Sweet Psalmist” (2 Sam 23:1), King David, as he focuses on his deliverance from various troubles, culminating in his deliverance from his sin (Psalm 32) and his enemies (Psalm 41). Reflections on ethics and worship with integrity are also found in Book 1 (Psalms 1; 14–15; 19; 24; and 26), making them notable themes.

Superscripts:

David is the only recognized author in Book 1 - accredited with 38 of 41 of its Psalms (if you credit Psalm 2 to David). The remaining three (Psalms 1, 10, and 33) are anonymous and carry no superscript.

Psalms of particular note in Book 1:

- Psalms 9–10, 25, 34, and 37 are **Acrostic** poems. An *acrostic* is a poem in which the first letter of each stanza spells out the alphabet (or a word or message). A recognizable example of a modern acrostic would be the song L.O.V.E., performed most notably by Nat “King” Cole. Hebrew Acrostics typically spell out the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters). Psalms 9 and 10 form one single acrostic.
- Psalm 14 is almost an exact mirror of Psalm 53.
- Psalm 23 is probably the most well-known Psalm. Christians love this Psalm especially for Christ’s declaration of Himself as “The Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11–18).
- Psalm 30 was David’s Psalm for dedicating the Temple. This is interesting because David was not alive to see the dedication of the Temple. This shows how eager he was for a permanent dwelling place for God to made in Jerusalem. Remember, he had wanted to build God a Temple himself, but God stops him and tells him that his son (Solomon) would one day build it (2 Samuel 7:1–16).
- The *concluding doxology* of Book 1 is Psalm 41:13.

Questions about Book 1

The Greek and Latin versions of Psalm 9–10 have these Psalms combined as a single Psalm, in part because, together, they create one basic *acrostic*. Moreover, there are thematic similarities. Take a couple minutes and skim Psalms 9 and 10. What do they have in common? How are they different?

It would be fascinating to do a study on all the questions asked in the Psalms! A common question (asked more than 20 times in the Psalms) starts with, “How long...?” In Psalm 13, “How long?” is repeated four times. Take a look at Ps. 13, what helps the Psalmist wait? Can what helped them, also help us? How so?

Psalm 11

To the choirmaster. Of David.

- 1 In the LORD I take refuge;
 how can you say to my soul,
 "Flee like a bird to your mountain,
- 2 for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
 they have fitted their arrow to the string
 to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
- 3 if the foundations are destroyed,
 what can the righteous do?"
- 4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
 the LORD's throne is in heaven;
 his eyes see, his eyelids test the
 children of man.
- 5 The LORD tests the righteous,
 but his soul hates the wicked and the
 one who loves violence.
- 6 Let him rain coals on the wicked;
 fire and sulfur and a scorching wind
 shall be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous;
 he loves righteous deeds;
 the upright shall behold his face.

Psalm 11

To the choirmaster. Of David.

1	In the LORD I take refuge;	A - David in YHWH's presence.
	how can you say to my soul, "Flee like a bird to your mountain,	B - David should flee!
2	for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;	C - The wicked attack in the dark.
3	if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"	D - Destructible foundations.
4	The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven;	D - Indestructible foundations.
	his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.	
5	The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.	C - YHWH sees what eyes can't see.
6	Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.	B - Wicked should flee!
7	For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.	A - Righteous ppl in YHWH's presence.

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 11

This Psalm says its “for the choirmaster.” Why do you think it was helpful for Israelites to sing this Psalm?

There is a popular Christian slogan that “God loves the sinner but hates the sin.” What do you make of that slogan in light of verse 5?

Psalm 11 is a chiasm with a double-central-axis (D). What do you think the message of the axis is?

David’s counsel was suggesting that he should run in fear from a coup (or at least that’s what it seems). Have you ever had to navigate getting bad advice from someone you trust during frantic times? What is your typical response to that feeling?

Psalm 22

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the
words of my groaning?
- ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.
- ³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- ⁴ In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- ⁵ To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to
shame.
- ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the
people.
- ⁷ All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their
heads;
- ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"
- ⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's
breasts.
- ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been
my God.
- ¹¹ Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.
- ¹² Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
- ¹⁷ I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
- ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
- ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!
- ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!
You have rescued me from the horns of the
wild oxen!
- ²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will
praise you:
- ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring
of Israel!
- ²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.
- ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great
congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.
- ²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.
- ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.
- ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming
generation;
- ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a
people yet unborn,
that he has done it.

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 22

Psalm 22 was written by David. In what ways does this Psalm accurately reflect the life of David? In what ways are the struggles he faced poetically dramatized in this Psalm?

Why do you think Psalm 22 so closely resembles the crucifixion-narrative of Jesus?

How can Psalm 22 be both true of David AND true of Jesus? Is that an option in the Bible? Can you think of any other examples of this?

Why would Jesus cry out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" on the Cross?

WEEK 4

PSALMS FROM BOOK 2

Psalms 42-72

WEEK 4 – PSALMS FROM BOOK 2

In Book 2, King David’s individual laments are joined by more lamenting voices (imagine one person’s crying voice being joined by a choir of crying voices). This Book is kicked off with a collection of lament Psalms by the Sons of Korah (Psalms 42, 44–49) – the first Psalms to be ascribed to someone other than David. Book 2 ends with a Praise Psalm written by Solomon. The reader gets the sense that the whole community of Yahweh-followers is under distress, not just David. This Book is a journey by the entire community from despair to praise.

Psalms of note:

- Psalms 42 and 43 share the same refrain (see 42:5, 11 and 43:5), so most Bible scholars take them to be one single unified lament. Psalm 42–43 is a **Strophe** rather than a *Chiasm* – which means that thoughts are organized like verses and choruses, recurring, sometimes identical and sometimes similar.
- Psalm 45’s superscript calls it “A Love Song.” Its tone is completely unlike the 44 before it.
- Psalm 50 is the first appearance of a Psalm credited to Asaph.
- Psalm 51–63 contain a high concentration of Psalms with detailed superscripts relating to the life of David. 8 of the 13 Psalms that are related to the life of David are found in this collection.
- Psalm 72 is credited to Solomon and is a Psalm of Praise.
- The *concluding doxology* of this book is Psalm 72:18–19.

Questions about Book 2

The name “Yahweh” appears 695 times in the Psalms (an average of 4.6 times per Psalm). In Book one it appears 272 times, but in Book 2 it only appears 30 times. What do you think is going on in in Book 2? Is it just coincidence? What’s your theory?

* Factoid: Jeremiah is the only other book that uses the name Yahweh more – 726 times!

The last verse in Book 2 (7:20) says “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (72:20). However, Psalm 72 is not written by David, but by his son Solomon. Furthermore, David is credited with writing 20 more Psalms after Psalm 72. So what does 72:20 mean when it says, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended”? Was this an accident? What’s your theory?

Psalm 42

To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
² My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?

A

³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
"Where is your God?"

B

⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I would go with the throng
and lead them in procession to
the house of God
with glad shouts and songs of praise,
a multitude keeping festival.

C

⁵ 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 ⁶ and my God.

REFRAIN

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.

C

⁷ Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.

CENTRAL AXIS

⁸ By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹ I say to God, my rock:
"Why have you forgotten me?"

A

A -

B -

C -

This week, we'll work together to unlock this poem by finding the commonality between ideas - take some time to consider how the ideas in each corresponding section are related, and then write a small summary statement at the bottom of the page.

Why do I go mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?"

¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my bones,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me all the day long,
"Where is your God?"

B

¹¹ 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.

REFRAIN

Psalm 43

¹ Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause
against ungodly people,
from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!
² For you are the God in whom I take refuge;
why have you rejected me?

A

Why do I go about mourning
because of the oppression of my enemy?

B

³ Send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling!
⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.

C

⁵ 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.

REFRAIN

CENTRAL AXIS (summarize here) -

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 42-43

The Sons of Korah use several colorful word-pictures. List a few of them here. What do you think they're trying to communicate through this use of colorful language? Why don't they speak more "plainly"?

This Psalm is called a "Maskil," which scholars think means something like "a Psalm of 'wisdom' or 'instruction.'" How can Psalm 42-43 give wisdom or instruction to the reader?

42:4; 42:6,8; and 43:3 all tell the sub-story of the Psalmist being far away from the Jerusalem Temple and really missing it. Why do you think this is so difficult for the Psalmist?

When you feel far away from God or forgotten by God, what do you typically do? What does this Psalmist do?

WEEK 5

PSALMS FROM BOOK 3

Psalms 73-89

WEEK 5 – PSALMS FROM BOOK 3

Book 3 Summary:

Book 3 is tied for “shortest book,” with only 17 Psalms. The lamenting voices that had joined King David in Book 2 are now joined by a couple more voices, and the tone becomes notably darker. The opening Psalm (73) starkly questions the justice of God before seeing light in God’s presence – and by Psalm 88 (the bleakest of all Psalms), that light has almost gone out. Book 2 ended with the high point of royal aspirations (a nearly-exuberant and royal Psalm by Solomon) but Book 3 concludes in Psalm 89 with these expectations badly threatened – the Davidic line completely falling apart and the Psalmist questioning God’s commitment to the Davidic Covenant (89:38-39). However, some sharp rays of hope do occasionally pierce the darkness (e.g., Psalms 75; 85; 87).

David’s voice also becomes incredibly faint in Book 3. Where he had written 38 of 41 Psalms in Book 1, **David only writes 1 of the 17 Psalms that make up Book 3.** *This is intentional* – the compiler of the Psalms is sharing a story about David and his kingly line that will be more-or-less extinguished at the end of Book 3. Remember, Book 2 ended with the line “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (72:20).

Authors in Book 3:

Name	Psalms
Asaph (and his sons)	73-83
The Sons of Korah	84-85, 87-88*
King David	86
Heman the Ezrahite	88*
Ethan the Ezrahite	89

Questions about Book 3

In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, God promised that one of David’s descendants would rule forever. But 2 Kings 25 (and 1 Chronicles 36) document the decline of Jerusalem, and Israel’s captivity in Babylon – after which point there has “never” been a Davidic King on the throne. We have followed this story in Books 1-3 of the Psalms. At this point, if you were a Jew reading the Psalms in the 8th century BC, what would the book of Psalms (*Tehillim*) mean to you?

Read Psalm 89:38-45. Ethan the Ezrahite accuses God of going back on the promise to David (2 Sam 7:12-16). Considering what you know about the Gospel, what would your response to Ethan be?

Psalm 79

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
- 2 They have given the bodies of your servants
to the birds of the heavens for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.
- 3 They have poured out their blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.
- 4 We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.
- 5 How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?
Will your jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out your anger on the nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call upon your name!
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.
- 8 Do not remember against us our former iniquities;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and atone for our sins,
for your name's sake!
- 10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood
of your servants
be known among the nations before our eyes!
- 11 Let the groans of the prisoners come before you;
according to your great power,
preserve those doomed to die!
- 12 Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors
the taunts with which they have
taunted you, O Lord!
- 13 But we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will
recount your praise.

Psalm 79

A Psalm of Asaph.

¹ O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

A -

² They have given the bodies of your servants
to the birds of the heavens for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.

³ They have poured out their blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.

⁴ We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.

B -

⁵ How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?
Will your jealousy burn like fire?

⁶ Pour out your anger on the nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call upon your name!

⁷ For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.

C -

⁸ Do not remember against us our former iniquities;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.

⁹ Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and atone for our sins,
for your name's sake!

D -

¹⁰ Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood
of your servants
be known among the nations before our eyes!

¹¹ Let the groans of the prisoners come before you;
according to your great power,
preserve those doomed to die!

C -

¹² Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors
the taunts with which they have
taunted you, O Lord!

B -

¹³ But we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will
recount your praise.

A -

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 79

Some Context: 12 Psalms were written by "Asaph." However, the Asaph that wrote this Psalm probably wasn't the same Asaph of the other Psalms. The "original Asaph" was ordained by King David to be a worship leader around 1000BC. *This* Asaph, however, probably lived in the mid 400's BC (in the days of Nehemiah). In this Psalm, he clearly seems to be telling the story the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (vs 1) and of the conquered Israelite exiles (vs 11) – all of which happened in 586 BC. The third wave of Jews returned to Jerusalem with Nehemiah in 445 BC and in those days descendants of Asaph were the worship leaders. See Nehemiah 7:44; 11:17, 22; 12:35, 46.

What do you think the Central Axis (D) of this Chiasm is saying? What story does this arch tell? Summarize it here.

Verse 8 asks God to forgive Israel's "iniquity" and verse 9 asks God to atone for Israel's "sin." In Hebrew these are two different words: "Iniquity" = *avon*, and "Sin" = *hata*. *Avon* carries the idea of "crookedness" while *hata* carries the idea of "failure." Before exile, how had Israel been "crooked"? How had they "failed"? In what ways have you been "crooked" and in what ways have you "failed" in relation to God or others?

Why does Asaph ask God to forgive Israel "for [His] name's sake"?

WEEK 6

PSALMS 89 & 90

THE DRAMATIC MOVE INTO BOOK 4

WEEK 6 – PSALMS 89 & 90

Psalm 89 & 90 Overview

Psalm 89 and 90 is the major transition from Book 3 to Book 4. Book 3 could be summarized as the communal lament of Israel over the collapse of the Davidic Line – of which Psalm 89 is the climax. Book 4 on the other hand marks a major turning point in the tone of the Psalms – becoming significantly brighter. Exuberant Praise Hymns begin to appear much more frequently and the reader’s focus begins to turn towards God’s faithfulness, sovereignty, holiness, and love (among many other attributes). Skim through the first 10 Psalms of Book 4 and take a look at the heading of each – Do you get the feeling there’s been a major shift in this Book?

Psalm 89 was written by *Ethan the Ezrahite* and Psalm 90 was written by *Moses*. Both of the authors of these two Psalmists are only credited with writing one psalm in entire the Book of Psalms! Take a minute and read their short biographies in the Appendix.

Questions about the transition from Book 3 to Book 4

In your own words, summarize the story the Psalms has told thus far from Books 1 through 3.

Knowing what we know about the story of the Psalms thus far (Book 1-3), why would the compiler of the Psalms start Book 4 with a Psalm written by someone who lived so long before the Davidic Kings? (For reference, Moses lived about 500 years before David).

This Week: We’ll focus more on the role these two Psalms play in the grand narrative of Psalms.

1. Read God’s Covenant with David in 2 Sam 7:4-16, then read Psalm 89 slowly and reflectively.
2. Read Psalm 89 again, but this time: use different colors to highlight: “Steadfast love” “Faithfulness” and anything relating to “David” or God’s promises to David and his family.
3. What is Ethan is accusing God of in vs 38-51? Write down the verbs used in verses 38-41.
4. Read Psalm 90 – and as you do, imagine you’re a Jew returning from Exile (a “Psalm-89-Jew”). Mark down how certain verses in Psalm 90 might strike you. *Hint: verse 1 is huge*.

Psalm 89 A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

¹ I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness
to all generations.

² For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever;
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."

³ You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:

⁴ 'I will establish your offspring forever,
and build your throne for all generations.'" *Selah*

⁵ Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,
⁷ a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him?

⁸ O LORD God of hosts,
who is mighty as you are, O LORD,
with your faithfulness all around you?

⁹ You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.

¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

¹¹ The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.

¹² The north and the south, you have created them;
Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.

¹³ You have a mighty arm;
strong is your hand, high your right hand.

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

¹⁵ Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,
¹⁶ who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.

¹⁷ For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.

Vs 1-18: The Lord's Kingship

¹⁸ For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁹ Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said:
"I have granted help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.

²⁰ I have found David, my servant;
with my holy oil I have anointed him,
²¹ so that my hand shall be established with him;
my arm also shall strengthen him.

²² The enemy shall not outwit him;
the wicked shall not humble him.

²³ I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.

²⁴ My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him,
and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

²⁵ I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the rivers.

Vs 19-37: Recap of Davidic Covenant

²⁶ He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

²⁷ And I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.

²⁸ My steadfast love I will keep for him forever,
and my covenant will stand firm for him.

²⁹ I will establish his offspring forever
and his throne as the days of the heavens.

³⁰ If his children forsake my law
and do not walk according to my rules,
³¹ if they violate my statutes
and do not keep my commandments,
³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with stripes,
³³ but I will not remove from him my steadfast love
or be false to my faithfulness.

³⁴ I will not violate my covenant
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

³⁵ 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*

Vs 19-37: Recap of Davidic Covenant

³⁸ But now you have cast off and rejected;
you are full of wrath against your anointed.

³⁹ You have renounced the covenant with your servant;
you have defiled his crown in the dust.

⁴⁰ You have breached all his walls;
you have laid his strongholds in ruins.

⁴¹ All who pass by plunder him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.

⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his foes;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.

⁴³ You have also turned back the edge of his sword,
and you have not made him stand in battle.

⁴⁴ You have made his splendor to cease
and cast his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵ You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with shame. *Selah*

⁴⁶ How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?

⁴⁷ Remember how short my time is!
For what vanity you have created all the children of man!

⁴⁸ What man can live and never see death?
Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? *Selah*

⁴⁹ LORD, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David?

⁵⁰ Remember, O LORD, how your servants are mocked,
and how I bear in my heart the insults of
all the many nations,

⁵¹ with which your enemies mock, O LORD,
with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed.

⁵² Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen!

Vs 38-52: Lament

Psalm 90

A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.
² Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

A -

³ You return man to dust
and say, "Return, O children of man!"
⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.
⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning:
⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
that do not call upon your name!

B -

⁷ For we are brought to an end by your anger;
by your wrath we are dismayed.
⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath;
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.
¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

C -

¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger,
and your wrath according to the fear of you?
¹² So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.

C -

¹³ Return, O Lord! How long?
Have pity on your servants!
¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
and for as many years as we have seen evil.
¹⁶ Let your work be shown to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.

B -

¹⁷ Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!

A -

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALMS 89 and 90

In Psalm 89, God's "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" are mentioned 7 times each. Yet, what is the problem in verses 38-52?

What does Psalm 89 teach us about the human tendency to doubt God's faithfulness to carry out His promises?

Do you see Jesus in Psalm 89? How? (It might be helpful to cross-reference Mt. 1:12-17 and Luke 3:23-31).

Read Psalm 90:1. If you were a Jew who had just returned home after 70 years of captivity in Babylon - both your city and your Temple were still destroyed, how would this verse make you feel? Why?

In what ways might the nature of Moses' prayer to God in 90:12b ("teach us to number our days") have been relevant for post-exilic Israel? In what ways is it relevant for us today?

WEEK 7

PSALMS FROM BOOK 4

Psalms 90-106

WEEK 7 – SELECTIONS FROM BOOK 4

Book 4 Summary:

Being comprised of only 17 Psalms, Book 4 is tied for “shortest book” in the Psalms (Book 3 also has 17). **Psalm 90 is an unexpected opening response to the problems raised by Book 3** because it was written by Moses hundreds of years before Israel had any kings. This reminds the reader that God was active on Israel’s behalf long before David was ever born. In fact, God was active on Israel’s behalf while they were slaves in Egypt with no Temple or land of their own. This theme is taken up in Psalms 105-106, which summarizes God’s dealings with His people before any kings reigned. In the middle of Book 4 is a group of psalms (93-99) characterized by the refrain “The LORD reigns.” This truth refutes the doubts of Psalm 89.

One might summarize Book 4 by saying something like “David’s kingly line may appear to be failed, the temple and city may be destroyed, but the True King, King YHWH, is still King!” How amazing that God Himself incarnated and was born of David’s line? After Psalm 89, David is no longer referred to as “King,” but Books 4 and 5 exalt Yahweh repeatedly as the forever-King of all Israel and all the world.

Book 4 is a major genre twist compared to the *Lament Psalms* that dominate Books 1-3

Literary Type/ Genre	Description
Laments	90, 102
Hymns of Praise	95, 100, 103-104
Hymns of Thanksgiving	91, 92
Historical Psalms	105-106
Enthronement Psalms	93-94, 96-99, 101

Psalms of note in Book 4:

- Psalm 92 is “A Song for the Sabbath” and was sung in the Temple on Sabbath days (Saturday).
- Psalms 93-101 contains seven “Enthronement Psalms” – looking towards God’s final reign on earth.
- Psalms 105-106 recount Israel’s history before the time of the Kings.
- Besides Moses, David is the only other credited author in Book 4, with two credits (101 and 103). David is also credited with Psalm 95 according to Hebrews 4:7.

Questions about Book 4

Why do you think 5th century Jews needed Book 4? Why didn’t the Compiler(s) stop after Book 3?

Jesus *lamented* regularly in the Gospels, but he didn’t seem to pray many *prayers of praise*... why?

Psalm 103

Of David.

1 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,
3 who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love
and mercy,
5 who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like
the eagle's.

6 The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding
in steadfast love.
9 He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
10 He does not deal with us according
to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the
earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward
those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our
transgressions from us.
13 As a father shows compassion to his
children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those
who fear him
14 For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
17 But the steadfast love of the LORD is from
everlasting to everlasting on
those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's
children,
18 to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.
19 The LORD has established his throne in
the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word!
21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers, who do his will!
22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Psalm 103. Of David

<p>¹ 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, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.</p>	<p>A -</p>
<p>⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.</p>	<p>B -</p>
<p>⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.</p>	<p>C -</p>
<p>⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.</p>	<p>D -</p>
<p>¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.</p>	<p>E -</p>
<p>¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;</p>	<p>F -</p>
<p>¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.</p>	<p>F -</p>
<p>¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him</p>	<p>E -</p>
<p>¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.</p>	<p>D -</p>
<p>¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,</p>	<p>C -</p>
<p>and his righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.</p>	<p>B -</p>
<p>¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! ²¹ Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! ²² Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!</p>	<p>A -</p>

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 103

What "Benefit" of the Lord (vs 2) stands out to you in this Psalm, or spoke to you in some way? Why?

Near the beginning *Inclusio* of this Psalm there is a line that says "... **forget not** all his benefits" (vs 2b) and towards the concluding *Inclusio* it says "...**remember** to do his commandments" (vs 18b). What is the connection between remembering God's "benefits" and remembering to obey His Word? Why does this distinction matter?

The central axis tells us that Yahweh is steadfastly loving and forgiving towards those who "fear Him." What does it mean to "fear" Yahweh? Do you fear Yahweh? Why or why not?

How does this Psalm *encourage* you? How does it *challenge* you?

Bonus Question: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is called *The "Shema"* and is Israel's most important prayer - prayed by Jews twice a day. It contains the greatest command in the Bible - to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with your soul and with all your might." Compare this Psalm to Deuteronomy 6:1-15 (an expansion of the Shema). What themes does Psalm 103 share with Deuteronomy 6?

WEEK 8

PSALMS FROM BOOK 5

PSALMS 107-150

WEEK 8 – SELECTIONS FROM BOOK 5

Book 5 Summary:

The structure of Book 5 reflects the closing petition of Book 4 in 106:47 which says: “Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.” It begins by declaring that God does answer prayer (Psalm 107) and the concludes with five Hallelujah psalms (146-150).

In between Psalm 107 and 150 there are several psalms affirming the validity of God’s promises to David (Psalms 110; 132; 144), two collections of Davidic psalms (108-110; 138-145); the longest psalm, celebrating the value of the law (Psalm 119); and 15 psalms of ascent for use by pilgrims going to Jerusalem for major festivals (Psalms 120-134).

Book 5 communicates a resounding “eucatastrophe” (a sudden change for the good) in the story of the Psalms and is dominated by Praise psalms. It says, “Yes! God has heard Israel’s prayer! He is not done with King David’s line, but HE Himself is also the King – Praise Him (Hallelujah)!”

Psalms of note in Book 5:

- **Psalm 110 is the most-quoted Psalm in the New Testament.**
- Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible AND is the middle chapter of the Bible – being the 595th chapter out of 1,189 chapters. (Psalm 119, on the other hand, is the longest chapter in the Bible).
- Besides David, Solomon is the only other credited author in Book 5, with Psalm 127 credited to him.
- Psalm 137 outrightly talks about the Babylonian exile – making it one of the youngest Psalms.
- Psalms 113-118 are a collection of *Praise Psalms* known as the “**Egyptian Hallal Psalms.**” ‘Hallal’ is the Hebrew word for ‘Praise.’ Egypt is only mentioned once (114:1), but this section contains several other elements that point the reader to Israel’s flight from Egypt in the Exodus.
- Psalms 120-134 are called “**Songs of Ascent.**” These were probably psalms sung as the exiles “went up from Babylon.” They became songs sung as Israelites would “go up” to Jerusalem for religious festivals.
- Psalms 146-150 make up the doxology of the entire Psalter and are called the “Hallelujah Psalms.”
- Book 5 contains four *Acrostic* Psalms: 111, 112, 119, 145.

Questions about Book 5

In Book 5, David is credited with fifteen Psalms. Between Books 3 and 4 David only wrote three Psalms. Knowing what we know about the storyline of Psalms, why this sudden reappearance of David? What does this communicate?

Psalm 110

A Psalm of David

- ¹ The LORD says to my Lord:
 “Sit at my right hand,
 until I make your enemies your footstool.”
- ² The LORD sends forth from Zion
 your mighty scepter.
 Rule in the midst of your enemies!
- ³ Your people will offer themselves freely
 on the day of your power,
 in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
 the dew of your youth will be yours.
- ⁴ The LORD has sworn
 and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever
 after the order of Melchizedek.”
- ⁵ The Lord is at your right hand;
 he will shatter kings on the day of
 his wrath.
- ⁶ He will execute judgment among the
 nations,
 filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
 over the wide earth.
- ⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way;
 therefore he will lift up his head.

Psalm 110

A Psalm of David.

¹ The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."

A -

² The LORD sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!

B -

³ Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power,
in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.

C -

⁴ The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind,
"You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek."

D -

⁵ The Lord is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of
his wrath.

C -

⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
over the wide earth.

B -

⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way;
therefore he will lift up his head.

A -

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 110

Jewish scholars believe that the subject (the “Lord” – *Adonai*) of this Psalm is either David, the Jewish Messiah, or perhaps even Abraham – but NOT Jesus of Nazareth. Read Mt. 22:41-46. What do you think? In what ways does Jesus meet (or not meet) the qualities of the “Lord” in Psalm 110?

The *central axis* of Psalm 110 is verse 4, which makes it important. What does it mean to be a “Priest after the order of Melchizedek”? Read Melchizedek’s story in Genesis 14:18-24. List the attributes of Melchizedek here. (Note: Besides Ps 110, Gen 14 is the only place where Melchizedek is mentioned in the Old Testament).

Focus on Ps. 110:3a. Assuming this passage is about Jesus, like NT authors believed it was, what does it mean for Jesus’ people to (1) “offer themselves freely the day of [His] power,” and (2) to do so in “holy garments”? How can we offer ourselves freely to our *Adonai* Jesus?

Bonus Question: Read the story of Gideon in Judges 6-8. Do you think that Psalm 110 was intentionally written as a better Gideon-narrative? Why or why not?

WEEK 9

PSALM 119

DELIGHTING IN GOD'S WORD

WEEK 9 – PSALM 119

Recap

If you recall, Psalm 1 introduces the theme of *the Torah* (God’s “Law” or “Instruction”). Psalm 1 presents a “blessed” person who finds the “way” back to the Garden-esque presence of Yahweh (where the Tree of Life is) by living in complete submission to God’s Torah, delighting and meditating on it.

On the other hand, humans are completely incapable of living in complete submission to God’s Torah. This is why Psalm 2 introduces us to a Messiah (Rescuer) – called Yahweh’s “Son” – who is totally submitted to God’s Torah. And at the very end of Psalm 2 we find that anyone who takes refuge in the Son is “blessed.”

So, in Christ we are “blessed” – His blessedness has become our blessedness. But what does “taking refuge in Him” look like? Psalm 2 says it looks like “serving Yahweh with fear” and “rejoicing with trembling” and “kissing the Son.” “Rejoicing and trembling” means we take refuge in Jesus by obeying His commands with both fear and gladness, because His blessedness covers our imperfect ability to obey God. “Kissing the Son” means we also take refuge in Jesus by adoring Him because He is glorious and has done glorious things for us.

Approaching Psalm 119

This is what makes Psalm 119 so magnificent. In it, the author (anonymous) waxes and gushes eloquently for an astounding 176 verses about how much he delights in God’s Word. In 176 verses there are 178 occurrences of synonyms for “God’s Word” (see chart below). As Christians, this is the person we’re growing to be like, because this is the way to God – opened and secured for us by God’s own Son.

Synonyms for “God’s Word”	Translation	# of Occurrences in Ps 119
<i>torah</i>	Law	25
<i>dabar</i>	Word(s), Answer	24
<i>edah, edot</i>	Testimony, Testimonies	24
<i>mishpatim</i>	Rules, Ordinances, Judgment(s), Way	23
<i>mitsvah</i>	Commandment(s)	21
<i>choq</i>	Statutes, Decrees	21
<i>Piqqudim</i>	Precepts	21
<i>Imrah</i>	Word(s), Promise(s)	19

Notes on Psalm 119

- Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm, and longest chapter in the Bible – with 176 verses.
- Psalm 119 is composed of various genres; however, it is best to call it a “Wisdom Psalm.”
- **Psalm 119 an *Acrostic* that has been “beefed up.”** Instead of *each verse* beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in Psalm 119 *each stanza* begins *each verse* with the letter assigned to that stanza. For example – Verses 1-8 have been assigned the letter *Aleph* (א - the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet) – ***each verse in stanza Aleph begins with an Aleph***, and so on.

This Week we will read ALL of Psalm 119 out loud, switching readers after each stanza. We will read at a thoughtful speed (not too fast). Feel free to underline or highlight, but don’t get too busy taking notes. Stay in the reading and prayerfully listen to the words. Try to feel what the author is feeling and imagine what it might be like for you to feel the same kind of adoration of God’s word.

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 119

According to verse 1-8, what does it mean to be "blessed"? How does this differ from the world's conception of "being blessed"?

Why should we be concerned with obeying God's Word? Moreover, why should we be concerned with "delighting" in it?

In the Gospels, how did Jesus demonstrate a Psalm 119 love for God's Word?

Compared to this Psalmist, how would you describe your desire for God's Word? Is there anything you can do practically to enhance your love for God's Word in the coming weeks?

Take a minute to pray that God would refresh, increase, or perhaps even resuscitate your love for His Word. Jot down a small prayer here, a prayer for God to give you more love and desire for His Word, and then try to pray that prayer in quiet moments this week.

WEEK 10

DOXOLOGY

THE 'HALLELUJAH' PSALMS

WEEK 10 – DOXOLOGY

The Hallelujah Psalms

Unlike the one-verse doxologies which conclude Books 1-4, Book 5's concluding doxology is a five-psalm "Hallelujah" Chorus. Psalms 146-150 are not only a concluding doxology for Book 5 but for the entire Psalter as well.

The conclusion of the Psalter models for us a proper response to who Yahweh is and all that Yahweh has done: "Hallelujah!" The term *Hallelujah* is a compound Hebrew word - *Hallel* = "Praise" and *Jah* is the shortened form of "Yahweh." **So *Hallelu-Jah* = "Praise Yahweh!"**

And so, the story of the Psalms closes with an exclamation! Let's rehearse the story of the Psalter:

BOOK 1	King David is lamenting alone. Readers are welcome to lament their sad state of affairs with their most famous King - who is the symbol of their future hope for freedom.
BOOK 2	All of Israel's most famous Psalmists join King David in lamenting. This gives Readers an expanded voice and vocabulary for articulating how they feel.
BOOK 3	David's voice is silenced. The entire Jewish community is thrown into confusion because God's promise to give David a descendant who will be on the throne forever looks shattered.
BOOK 4	Israel's Psalmists remembers that Yahweh is, has always been, and will always be King of Israel. Readers are invited to remember and hope in this.
BOOK 5	King Yahweh is not done with David's line! There is an Anointed King, a descendant of David, who is called "God's Son" who delights in God's Law, and who will share his blessedness with those of us who fail to live completely submitted to God's Law - and He is coming.
DOXOLOGY	PRAISE YAHWEH!

Psalms of note in Book 5:

- Psalm 147 was probably written after Babylonian exile (see vs 2, 13-14)
- Psalm 150 mentions 8 different instruments that should be used to praise the LORD.

The song "The Doxology" was written in 1695 by an Anglican Bishop named Thomas Ken. It was originally the last verse in a longer song titled "Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun." It is a fitting companion for the heart, function, and bombastic attitude of this concluding psalm.

Questions about the Doxology Psalms

Doxologies serve as concluding hymns of praise for the Church. Why is it important for God's people to practice "Doxology"? How can we practice a "discipline of doxology" (with or without music) in our daily lives?

Psalm 150

- 1 Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!
- 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his
excellent greatness!
- 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
- 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
- 5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- 6 Let everything that has breath
praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150

1	Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!	_____ to praise YHWH
2	Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!	_____ to praise YHWH
3 4 5	Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!	_____ to praise YHWH
6	Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!	_____ should praise YHWH

FURTHER REFLECTION ON PSALM 150

What is the Gospel? Work with a group to succinctly write what the Gospel is:

How much value do you place on musical worship and praise? Why is it a valuable part of the Christian life? Is it overrated in any way?

As a man, how do you lead yourself in praising God? For men with families of their own, how do you lead your family in praising God?

How has God acted powerfully in your life and shown you His goodness?

APPENDIX

Authorial Index:

Author	# of Psalms	Psalms <i>* = authorship is ascribed outside the Psalms</i>
King David	75	2*-9, 11-41, 51-65, 68-70, 86, 95*, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145
King Solomon	2	72, 127
Asaph (and his sons)	12	50, 73-83
The Sons of Korah	12	42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88
Heman the Ezrahite (a Son of Korah)	(1)	(88) - included also in 'The Sons of Korah'
Ethan the Ezrahite	1	89
Moses	1	90
Anonymous	47	1, 10, 33, 66-67, 71, 91-94, 96-100, 102, 104-107, 11-121, 123, 125, -126, 128-130, 132, 134-137, 146-150.

Biographical Sketches of the Psalmists:

- **David:** 1-2 Samuel documents the life and ministry of David. David was chosen by God and anointed to be the second King of Israel. He had an exemplary relationship with Yahweh and designed the Temple that his son, Solomon, would build. God promised him that his kingly line of descendants would never end - and the book of Psalms was compiled in the days after that kingly line had fallen apart. 2 Sam 23:1 calls him "The Sweet Psalmist of Israel" - he wrote almost half (maybe more) of the Psalms compiled in the book of Psalms. The superscript of 13 of the Psalms relates the psalm directly to events in David's life. Those Psalms are: Psalm 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, and 142.
- **Asaph (and his family):** Asaph and his sons were ordained by King David to lead the people in worship. Asaph's descendants were recommissioned as worship leaders when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem after Israel returned from exile in Babylon. (1 Ch 25:1; Neh 7:44, 12:46-47).
- **The sons of Korah (another family):** Korah's family was a priestly family (of the Levite clan of Kohath) In Numbers 16, a Jewish man named Korah and his sons rebelled against Moses and Aaron—and God caused the earth to swallow him up. His sons survived, though (Nu 26:11), and continued to serve in the house of the Lord.
- **Heman the Ezrahite:** Heman was one of the Sons of Korah, and author of Psalm 88. Most likely, this is the same Heman mentioned in 1 Kings 4:31 alongside Ethan the Ezrahite. Meaning, Heman was very wise.
- **Ethan the Ezrahite:** Ethan wrote Psalm 89 - which pivots the entire flow of the book of Psalms. The author of Kings makes a point to tell us specifically that Solomon was wiser than Ethan (1 Ki 4:31) - which sounds arrogant, but this suggests that Ethan himself was exceptionally wise. Ethan was likely a Son of Korah (though it is not explicitly stated in the superscript of his Psalm as with Heman in Ps 88), he was perhaps closely related to Heman.

- **Solomon:** Solomon was the son of King David who inherited the throne - making him the second King of the Davidic kingly line. His story is documented in 1 Kings 1-11. He built the first permanent Temple for God in Jerusalem, according to his father's instructions and design. He is also the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. God gave Solomon surpassing wisdom (1 Ki 4:29-34) though he ultimately spent much of his reign rejecting God's authority (1 Ki 11, Ecc 1-12), and passed the Kingdom off to his son poorly (1 Ki 12), resulting in a split-Kingdom.
- **Moses:** Moses was the leader of Israel during the Exodus and wilderness years. He had a close friendship with Yahweh (Ex 33:11) and transmitted God's Law to Israel 500 years before any human King ruled over Israel. He also oversaw the building of an elaborate dwelling tent so that Yahweh could actually live in the midst of His people (Ex 35:30-40:38). Moses is widely considered to be the [main] author of the Torah/ Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Background or Historical Information (from the superscripts):

13 Psalms are related to events in David's life:

Ps.	Incident (superscript)	Reference
3	When he fled from his son Absalom.	2 Sam 15-18
7	A <i>shiggaion</i> of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.	Unknown
18	He sung to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.	1 Sam 28-31, 2 Sam 1 (also see 2 Sam 22)
34	When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.	1 Sam 21:10-22:1
51	When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.	2 Sam 11-12
52	When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone into the house of Ahimelech."	1 Sam 22:9-19
54	When does the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"	1 Sam 23:19
56	When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.	1 Sam 21:10-15
57	When he had fled from Saul into the to the cave.	1 Sam 22:1 or 24:3
59	When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him.	1 Sam. 19:11
60	When he fought Aram Naharaim and Aram Zobah, and when Joab returned and struck down twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.	2 Sam 8:1-14; 1 Chron 18:12-13
63	When he was in the desert of Judah.	1 Sam 27; also 2 Sam 15-17, 23:14-15
142	When he was in the cave	1 Sam 22:1 or 24:3

(From The ESV Study Bible notes on Psalms)

2 Psalms are related to Temple rituals:

Psalm	Incident (superscript)	Reference
30	For the dedication of the Temple.	1 Ki 8:22; 1 Chron 22
38	For the memorial offerings	Lev 2:2,9,16

Literary Terms for Biblical Poetic Structure (From ESV Study Bible notes on Psalms)

Term	Explanation	Example
Image	A word or phrase that names a concrete action or thing; by extension, a character, setting, or event in a story is an image—a concrete embodiment of human experience or an idea.	The way (or path); the congregation (or assembly); nature (or harvest) (Psalm 1)
Metaphor	An implied comparison that does not use the formula <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> .	"The LORD is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1).
Simile	A figure of speech in which a writer compares two things using the formula <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> .	"He is like a tree planted by streams of water" (Ps. 1:3).
Personification	A figure of speech in which human attributes are given to something nonhuman, such as animals, objects, or abstract qualities.	Light and truth are personified as guides in Psalm 43:3.
Hyperbole	A figure of speech in which a writer consciously exaggerates for the sake of effect; usually that effect is emotional, and thus, loosely put, hyperbole usually expresses emotional truth rather than literal truth.	"My tears have been my food day and night" (Ps. 42:3).
Apostrophe	A figure of speech in which the writer addresses someone absent as though present and capable of responding. By slight extension, an apostrophe might be an address to something nonhuman as though it were human and capable of responding, even if the speaker is in the presence of the object.	The poet in Psalm 148:3 might well be looking up at the sun, moon, or stars as he commands them to praise God.

Psalm Title Classifications

Classification	#	Description	Psalms
"Maskil"	13	On the basis of one meaning of the Hebrew root <i>shakal</i> this title is usually understood as describing a psalm that is meant to give wisdom or insight. There are 13 of these. ⁱⁱ	32, 42, 44-45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88-89, 142
"Miktam"	6	The meaning is much disputed	16, 56-60
"Song" (<i>shir</i>)	16	The precise technical meaning of this title is uncertain, but it often occurs with joyful songs. This title "song" is joined with the title "a psalm" about a dozen times (for example, Psalms 65, 66, and 68).	30, 45-46, 48, 65-68, 75-76, 83, 87-88, 92, 98, 108
"Prayer" (<i>tihploth</i>)	5	A plea to God to protect the psalmist's life is a prominent element in most of the psalms with this title, for example in Psalm 17:14 or in Psalm 86:2. In Psalm 72:20 this title is also assigned to the larger collection of hymns which makes up Book 2 of the Psalms.	17, 86, 90, 102, 142
Song of Ascent (<i>shir hammaaloth</i>)	15	The meaning of this designation is not certain, but it is possible these were psalms sung as the exiles "went up from Babylon." They became songs sung as Israelites would "go up" to Jerusalem (which was on a hill) for their religious festivals.	120-134

Structure of the Psalter

Book 1	Psalms 1-41	Psalms 1-2 have no titles that attribute authorship (but see Acts 4:25 for Psalm 2); they provide an introduction to the Psalms as a whole. The remainder of Book 1 is made up almost entirely of psalms of David: only Psalms 10 (but see note on Psalm 9) and 33 lack a Davidic superscription. Prayers issuing from a situation of distress dominate, punctuated by statements of confidence in the God who alone can save (e.g., 9; 11; 16; 18), striking the note that concludes the book (40-41). Reflections on ethics and worship with integrity are found in Psalms 1; 14-15; 19; 24; and 26.
Book 2	Psalms 42-72	From the Davidic voice of Book 1, Book 2 introduces the first Korah collection (42-49, although 43 lacks a superscription), with a single Asaph psalm at Psalm 50. A further Davidic collection is found in Psalms 51-65 and 68-69, including the bulk of the "historical" superscriptions (51-52; 54; 56-57; 59-60; 63). Once again, lament and distress dominate the content of these prayers, which now also include a communal voice (e.g., Psalm 44; cf. Psalms 67; 68). The lone psalm attributed to Solomon concludes Book 2 with the Psalms' pinnacle of royal theology (72; cf. 45).
Book 3	Psalms 73-89	The tone darkens further in Book 3. The opening Psalm 73 starkly questions the justice of God before seeing light in God's presence; that light has almost escaped the psalmist in Psalm 88, the bleakest of all psalms. Book 2 ended with the high point of royal aspirations; Book 3 concludes in Psalm 89 with these expectations badly threatened. Sharp rays of hope occasionally pierce the darkness (e.g., Psalms 75; 85; 87). The brief third book contains most of the psalms of Asaph (Psalms 73-83), as well as another set of Korah psalms (Psalms 84-85; 87-88).
Book 4	Psalms 90-106	Psalm 90 opens the fourth book of the psalms. It may be seen as the first response to the problems raised by the third book (Psalms 73-89). Psalm 90, attributed to Moses, reminds the worshiper that God was active on Israel's behalf long before David. This theme is taken up in Psalms 103-106, which summarize God's dealings with his people before any kings reigned. In between there is a group of psalms (93-100) characterized by the refrain "The LORD reigns." This truth refutes the doubts of Psalm 89.
Book 5	Psalms 107-150	The structure of Book 5 reflects the closing petition of Book 4 in 106:47. It declares that God does answer prayer (Psalm 107) and concludes with five Hallelujah psalms (146-150). In between there are several psalms affirming the validity of the promises to David (Psalms 110; 132; 144), two collections of Davidic psalms (108-110; 138-145); the longest psalm, celebrating the value of the law (Psalm 119); and 15 psalms of ascent for use by pilgrims to Jerusalem (Psalms 120-134).

(Adjusted from The ESV Study Bible notes on Psalms)

Literary Genres of the Psalms

While we cannot know with complete accuracy the ancient categories for the psalms, the basic types of psalms can be very broadly summarized as: ⁱⁱⁱ

Literary Type/ Genre	Description
Laments	Presenting a troubling situation to the Lord
Hymns of Praise	Calling believers to admire God's attributes
Hymns of Thanksgiving	Thanking God for an answered prayer
Hymns Celebrating God's Law	Speaking of the wonders of God's written word
Wisdom Psalms	Exploring the themes found in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes
Songs of Confidence	Enabling worshippers to deepen their trust in God through difficult circumstances
Historical Psalms	Recounting and celebrating God's acts in history
Prophetic Hymns	Echoing themes found in the Prophets, especially calling God's people to covenant faithfulness

Daily Temple Psalms/ Days of Creation

Specific Psalms were sung daily in the Temple - they were chosen for having some supporting concept in their first verse.

Day	Creation Event	Psalms	Key Verse
Day 1	Light - Creation Begins	24	24:1 - <i>"The Earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof."</i> Indicates all creation belongs to God.
Day 2	Sky - Heaven/ Earth separation	48	48:1-2 - <i>"Great is the Lord...His Holy Mountain, beautiful in elevation..."</i> Indicates separation btwn heaven & earth.
Day 3	Land & Plants	82	82:1,5 - <i>"God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment..."</i> [w/o God], <i>"all the foundations of the earth are shaken."</i> May indicate that God the ultimate judge in this new world.
Day 4	Cosmos/ Calendar	94	94:1 - <i>"O LORD, God of vengeance... shine forth!"</i> God is the great Light and punishes those who serve lesser gods.
Day 5	Sea Creatures & Birds	81	81:1 - <i>"Sing aloud to God our strength."</i> May indicate that all creatures are meant to praise God.
Day 6	Land Creatures/ Humans	93	93:1 - <i>"The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty."</i> May indicate that on Day 6 God became King of living beings.
Day 7	Sabbath Rest	92	92:title - <i>"A song for the Sabbath."</i>

Acrostic Psalms: 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145. (9-10 form one single acrostic).

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Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

PSALM 1