

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

WITH STUDY NOTES

Psalms 1-19

A preacher's guide to the book of Psalms



HANDS to the PLOW

MINISTRIES

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Dear Reader,

The gospel (which is found in all the books of the Bible!) is not just to be learned. It is to be proclaimed. That is why this study is called, “A preacher’s guide to the book of Psalms”. This book does not cover all of the Psalms. It does, however, contain a few of the treasures found within a few of the Psalms. It does not do this perfectly. I am sure I missed many truths that are within the Psalms! The Scriptures are perfect. The notes in this book are not perfect. May our good God overcome the weaknesses in the study notes and bring strong help to his servants as they seek Christ in the book of Psalms.

Tom Kelby

November 16, 2015

Introduction

The book of Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament. Jesus and the Apostles taught theology from this book. They celebrated the reign of the Christ from this book. They did this, as you will soon discover, because the Psalms—all of them—are connected, in some way, to the Christ, the gospel event, and the people of the Christ. The Apostles did not, it is important to note, use the Psalms to teach history lessons about David and his reign. David knew, as you will see in the introductory notes titled “25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms”, that he was writing about the Christ. He knew he was writing the eternal song book for the people of the Christ.

This is a book of deep sorrow and of great joy. It is for times of intense suffering and joyful celebration. It is intended to bring comfort in times of despair and hope in times of deepest darkness. It is a celebration of our God and Father and of the Christ. That is why this book has been the song book and prayer book of the people of God for thousands of years. It was the song book and prayer book of the people who lived before the coming of Christ (they were looking forward to his reign), and it is the song book and prayer book of the people who are living after the coming of the Christ (they are looking backward to the victory he won by his life, death, and resurrection). All of the people of God for all time are united by the songs and prayers in the Psalms!

This book, like *A Preacher's Guide to the Book of Mark* (available from HandsToThePlow.org), is intended to be a tool for preachers and teachers. This book is focused on the first 19 chapters of the Psalms. But even though only 19 chapters are covered in this book, our prayer is that the introductory notes (“25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms”) and the notes in the 19 chapters themselves will help the preacher and teacher to read, understand, and proclaim truths from the 131 Psalms that are not covered in this book. In the back of the book is a brief summary of select Psalms that are not covered in this book. It is our desire, if the Lord allows, to cover more of the Psalms in a future study book.

This book begins with an introduction titled, “25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms”. Please carefully read this introduction before beginning your study of the individual Psalms themselves.

Preaching and teaching from the Psalms is different from teaching from an Old Testament narrative, the gospels, or from an epistle. The preacher or teacher needs to understand the ways of the poetry of the Psalms and be able to proclaim the truths found in the poetry to those who are listening. This will bring, we pray, joy to you and help to the people of God.

Great grace to you as study—and as you preach and teach—from the book of Psalms!

Tom Kelby and Bob McCoy

November, 2015

How to use this guide

1.

This book contains the first 19 chapters of the book of Psalms. Before each Psalm in this study, the reader will find a brief overview of that Psalm.

2.

After the overview, the reader will find the text from the Psalm itself. The text of the Psalm appears in the **upper portion** of the page.

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 ...

... is the first Psalm in the Psalter; therefore, it is of special significance. The final editor of the Psalms (the person or people who put the Psalms in their final order) put this Psalm first for a particular reason. Thus, this Psalm order put this Psalm first for a particular reason. Psalm 1 summarizes the message found within the Psalter. Psalm 1 also prepares the reader for what he or she will see in the rest of the Psalms.

... describes the people for whom all of the Psalms were written. The Psalter is the song book of those people who have been blessed by God. These people are distinguished by the fact that they (1) resist evil, (2) carefully listen to, delight in, and act upon God's good words as outlined in "the law of the Lord", (3) act upon God's good by God, (4) bear great fruit, and (5) are able to stand in the judgment because they are known by God and have been blessed by him.

... focuses attention on two kinds of people in the world: those who are wicked and those who are righteous. This particular Psalm does not (at least directly) call the wicked to repentance (while rather, it offers help and encouragement – see Psalm 2:10-12). Psalm is intended to help the righteous to see the great suffering that they undergo, and to encourage them to persevere in their faith. God will reward the righteous with great delight, and act upon his

Psalm 1

psalm 1

1 Blessed⁴ is the man⁵ who walks not in the counsel⁶ of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners,

4 "Blessed" is a description of the love, favor, mercy, approval, companionship, joy, fruitfulness, and help from God that is poured upon the person who is "blessed" by him. It is God's kindness, in all its forms, showered upon the person of his choosing (see Exodus 34:6-7a).

[illegible]

After these two introductory uses of **blest**, the word **blest** is further defined throughout the Psalms. See Psalm 2:1-2 (Paul quotes these verses in Romans 4:5-8; 5:3-12; 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 65:8, 84:4-5, 84:12; 89:15-16, 94:12-13, 106:3, 112:1, 119:1-3, 127:5; 128:1-2, 128:8-9, 144:15, and 146:5.

The word **man** can refer to people (both male and female) in general. In other words, this Psalm refers to any individual (whether male or female) who is blessed by God.

[illegible]

The wicked have plans ("counsel") that the blessed man does not participate in. The plans man (Jesus) and of THE blessed people who are only

6 The wicked have plans ("counsel") that the blessed man does not participate in. However, specified of the wicked are not specified in Psalm 1. The plans of the wicked are, however, specified in Psalm 2. Their plan is tied against the rule of Yahweh and, thus, refers to the "counsel" of Christ (Messiah in Hebrew). The plans of their wicked counsel. Psalm 2 does Anointed King, but does not describe the nature of their wicked counsel. The specific action of the wicked but does not describe the nature of their wicked counsel. The specific action of the wicked is to deliver the Christ in his order to fulfill their evil plans. Yahweh takes in order to deliver the Christ in his enemies and to put him in the place of greatest fruitfulness are more fully described in the rest of the Psalter.

20

20

4.

The study notes in the **lower portion** of the page are numbered. These numbers are red. The red numbers next to each study note are connected to a red number appearing within the text of the Psalm in the **upper portion** of the page. The numbers go together.

5.

The study notes sometimes list other passages of Scripture. These passages are sometimes from the Old Testament and sometimes from the New Testament. These passages should be carefully examined because they are connected to the Psalm that is being studied.

3.

This book also contains study notes that refer to certain words or verses or sections in the Psalm being studied. These study notes are located beneath the text of the Psalm in the **lower portion** of the page. The study notes are not sermons. They are intended to help the preacher discover the meaning of the Psalm.

25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms

1. The book of Psalms is the song book and prayer book of the people of God. This was true before Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. It is also true today. The songs and prayers in this book connect the people of God from all ages. It is still to be used by the church (see Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16). The fact that the Psalms are meant to be used by the people of God as they worship together is demonstrated by the many musical instructions found within the book. The book of Psalms is sometimes called the Psalter.

The fact that the Psalms is the song book and prayer book of the people of God means that this song book must be able to speak to the people of God in all ages. It needed to speak to those who lived before the coming of the Christ and it must speak to the people of God who are living after the coming of the Christ. This, indeed, is the case. The Psalms have been able to, without any additions or alterations, speak to the people of God in every age.

2. The book of Psalms is a book of theology. The Psalms teach readers how to think about God, his Anointed King (called the "Messiah" or the "Christ"), the people of God, the enemies of God, the world, and the Scriptures. Jesus and the Apostles frequently taught theological truth based on particular Psalms. Psalms is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament.

3. An editor (or editors) arranged the Psalms in a particular order. Thus, Psalm 1 is intentionally placed first in the Psalter and Psalm 150 is intentionally placed last. The editor did not explicitly indicate why the Psalms are arranged as they are. The reader needs to, by close reading, determine how the Psalms are connected.

The order of the Psalms demonstrates the plan of God and the ultimate victory of the Christ. The Psalter begins by portraying a struggle between good and evil. Evil is predominant. The Psalter ends with praise (there is no evil seen in Psalm 150). In the beginning portions of the Psalter, there are more laments. In the concluding books, there are more Psalms of praise.

While many of the Psalms were written during a time period when there was a king upon the throne in Israel, the final editor of the Psalms arranged the Psalms during a time period when there was no longer a king on the throne in Israel. Yet, the Psalms celebrate the rule of the Anointed King. Therefore, the organization of the Psalter

demonstrates the great faith of the editor in God's plans for God's people. The editor was trusting in a King who was to come even though he could not see him!

The editor arranged the Psalms during a time period when he had access to books of the Old Testament that were not yet written when most of the Psalms were originally written. This means that the editor, unlike David, had read the section of the Old Testament called "the prophets" (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). Surely, the things written about the Christ and the New Covenant and the coming Kingdom of God in "the prophets" helped the editor better understand the things that were written in the Psalms. In fact, the Psalms are quoted by the prophets (see Jeremiah 17:7-8, Ezekiel 47:12, and Zechariah 9:10). This means that at least some of the prophets were carefully studying the things that were written in the Psalms when they wrote their books. Indeed, this is exactly what said the prophets did when they wrote the Scriptures (see 1 Peter 1:10-12)! It is significant that the section called "the prophets" is placed before the book of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible. This is evidence that the final editor of the Hebrew Bible wanted the reader to read the Psalms with the teaching of "the prophets" firmly in mind.

4. The Psalms are broken into five "books": book 1 (1-41), book 2 (42-72), book 3 (73-89), book 4 (90-106), and book 5 (107-150).

The group of five books, as with the order of the individual Psalms, reflects the work of an editor. It is likely that the five books of the Psalms are meant to reflect the five books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). In other words, the Psalms are a reflection upon and an explanation of the gospel message that was already present (but not yet fully explained) in the five books of the Law (see Jesus' words regarding the writings of Moses in Luke 24:26-27, 24:44-47, and John 5:45-47). Evidence that the Psalms are reflecting the five books of the Law may also be seen in the way the Psalms quote particular portions from the Law,

applying the words in the Law to the Christ and the gospel event.¹ The five books of the Psalms reflect various aspects of the story of the Christ. Thus, the Psalms take the reader on a poetic “journey” from Christ’s anointing (Psalm 2), to his suffering and deliverance by God, to the creation of a holy people based on the Christ’s deliverance, to the suffering of the holy people of God, to the final victory of the Christ, and, finally, to the everlasting praise that arises from the final victory of the Christ. **The five books demonstrate that all aspects of the story of the Christ should be remembered and celebrated by the people of God.**

The first four books of the Psalms each end with a benediction (see Psalm 41:13, 72:18-20, 89:52, and 106:48). All four benedictions, while they are different, include the words “Blessed be the LORD” and “Amen”. Each benediction is a signal to the reader that that particular book in the Psalms has ended. Beyond this, the benedictions call the reader to pause (indicated by the word “Amen”), to reflect on the message of the book, and to, based on the message of the book, praise Yahweh (thus the words “Blessed be the LORD”). The benedictions were probably written by the editor who arranged the Psalms in their final order. They demonstrate the deep faith of the editor. The fifth book does not end with a blessing like the first four books. This may be because book five is the last book in the Psalms and, because of this, there was no need to signal to the reader a division between books. The fact that book five ends in a different manner, however, does not mean that book five ends without a benediction. The last five chapters of book five all end with the same words, “Praise the LORD!”. These chapters seem to be deliberately placed together as the fitting conclusion to book five and to the entire Psalter. Based on the message of the Psalms, which is the story of

¹ Consider, for instance, the way Psalm 118:14-16 quotes the “song of Moses” in Exodus 15:2. This Psalm is quoted several times in the New Testament. It is about the suffering and deliverance of the Christ and the praise from all people that should be given to Yahweh because of the coming and deliverance of the Christ. This Psalm’s “use” of the Song of Moses (from Exodus 15) connects the gospel event to the deliverance of God’s people from Egypt. This Psalm demonstrates that the exodus from Egypt was but a shadow of the far greater “exodus” that is celebrated in Psalm 118. Psalm 18 also uses Exodus 15 in the same way. Also consider the way Psalm 110 (another Psalm which is frequently quoted in the New Testament) uses the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20 to speak of the priesthood of the Christ.

the Christ, God's people are to "Praise the LORD!"²

5. The Psalms are poems. Poetry is one type of literature found within the Bible. Epistles (like Romans or 1 Peter) and narratives (like 1 Samuel or Esther) are two other types of literature found within the Bible. Each type of literature is a gift from God. Each type of literature has its own purpose.

Poetry is emotionally powerful. Like a song, poetry uses **words** and **patterns of words** in ways that are intended to move the heart. This means that much of a poem's power is in the way it makes the reader feel. The reader should feel deeply when reading poetry, because **poetry invites the reader to "enter" the poem**. The Psalms, by the very way they are written, call the reader to see himself or herself as the subject. Consider the following verse: "O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver" (Psalm 7:1-2). Even though this is a Psalm of David, and applies, in a unique way, to the Christ, the very way the Psalm is written (using the words "my", "I", and "me") invites the reader to see himself or herself as the subject. A narrative isn't like this. Rather, the narrative keeps the reader at a distance, recording events about other people. There is no invitation given to the reader to enter into the story and "become" the subject (i.e., a story about Peter is about Peter).

Poetry also differs from other types of literature in the Bible because poetry is memorable. The words and patterns of words are intended to make memorization easy. This is why the Psalms have been the most memorized portion of God's word for thousands of years.

6. Poems in the Bible, when they are set inside a narrative (or at the end of a narrative), serve an important purpose.

Sometimes, poems are found within narratives. This means that they are surrounded by a story (see, for instance, Genesis 9:25-27 or Numbers 23-24). Whenever a poem is found within a narrative (especially in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy) it demands very close attention. These poems, in some way, usually

² It is significant that a benediction is also used in the New Testament. However, it is not the benediction found in the Psalms. Instead, the Apostles have changed the wording of the benediction to reflect the relationship between God the Father and the Christ. Instead of saying, "Blessed be the LORD", the Apostles say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (see 2 Corinthians 1:3, 11:31, Ephesians 1:3, and 1 Peter 1:3). Because of Christ's coming and because of his relationship to God the Father, all of the spiritual blessings promised in the Psalms (and in the entire Old Testament) come to those who are in Christ!

summarize the main point of the narrative and point to Christ and the gospel event.

The Psalms are poems set within a large narrative (story). Even though the book of Psalms includes no narratives (stories), the reader needs to constantly remember that the book of Psalms is surrounded by the much larger narrative that is told throughout all of God's word. The large narrative that the Psalms are set within is the story of the Christ coming to save his people so that they might live in God's kingdom and worship him. Evidence of this larger narrative is found throughout the Psalter. Therefore, all of the poems in the Psalms are connected to a larger story. None of them stand alone.

7. Poets use "concrete" words. Concrete words are words that are connected to real things that you can see, touch, taste, hear, or smell. Poets use concrete words even when they are writing about ideas that are not concrete. For instance, in Psalm 18:34, the psalmist says that he can, "bend a bow of bronze". A bow of bronze is a real thing that can be held in one's hand. However, the poet does not mean that he can actually shoot a bow made out of bronze. In fact, he is not writing about real weapons of war at all. Rather, "bow of bronze" is a concrete way of describing the great strength God has given to him so that his enemies might not triumph over him.

Concrete words are easy to remember. However, they are sometimes difficult to understand. What does the poet mean when he says, "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors ... " (Psalm 24:7)? He seems to be imagining the gates of the city as if they have heads, and as if they are eagerly looking up because someone important is going to come through the gates! Concrete language forces the reader to think very hard about the meaning of the poem.

8. Hebrew poems have a distinctive form. The poetry in the Bible is written in a verse form called parallelism. Parallelism is a structure in which one clause says something, and the clause immediately following it echoes and (usually) intensifies the first clause in some way.

Parallelism can be seen in the following line of poetry:

"Arise, O LORD!

Save me, O my God!" **Psalm 3:7**

Notice how the first clause ("Arise, O LORD!") **parallels** the second clause ("Save me, O my God!"). This means they are like each other in many ways. There are two parts to each clause. In addition, the words follow the same pattern in each clause. Each clause begins

with the psalmist asking God to do something (“Arise” in the first clause is echoed by “Save me” in the second clause). Each clause ends with the psalmist calling God’s name (“O LORD” in the first clause is echoed by “O my God” in the second clause).

However, notice that the second clause does more than just echo the first clause. It also adds something to it. In the first clause, the poet asks God to arise, but in the second clause, he asks God to arise *in order that God might save him*.

This intensification also happens in the second part of the clause. In the first clause, the poet directs his request to the “LORD”. He doesn’t say how he is connected to the “LORD”. In the second clause, however, he directs his request to “**my** God”. It is clear, based on the second clause, that the psalmist knows the LORD and trusts him. He is asking God to save him because they have a relationship.

It is significant to note that the verse above uses two different titles for God: “LORD” and “God”. This happens frequently in the Psalms. The **title** “LORD” (spelled with all capital letters) is the way most English versions of the Bible translate the **name** “YHWH”—God’s sacred name. Scholars are not certain how this name was originally pronounced. However, it seems likely that it was pronounced “**Yahweh**”. Yahweh himself explains the meaning of this name in Exodus 3:13-17 and Exodus 6:2-8. Sometimes in the Psalms, the name “Yahweh” is shortened to “Yah”. This appears to be done for poetic reasons. This shortened version of the name is not made clear in the English. **In this study, when the name “LORD” appears in the English text, the notes will usually use the name “Yahweh”.**

The reader should note how different Psalms refer to God in different ways. “Yahweh” is frequently used in book 1 (Psalms 1-41) and book 2 (Psalms 42-72) of the Psalms. However, in book 3 of the Psalms (Psalms 73-89), the name “Yahweh” is rarely used. This may say something about the mind-set of the psalmists when these Psalms were written.

9. Some of the Psalms are structured in other unique ways.

Some of the Psalms (like Psalms 9 and 10) are arranged in alphabetical order (in the Hebrew). The alphabetical order will not be evident when the Psalms are translated into another language (like English). The psalmists also used other ways of creatively arranging particular Psalms. These features add to the beauty of the Psalms. However, it is important to note that the Apostles never refer to these features in the Psalms. The Apostles are concerned with the

words in the Psalms. **It is not necessary** to recognize the creative arrangement of a Psalm in order to understand its meaning.

10. The Psalms were originally written in Hebrew. Because the Psalms were written in an ancient language, scholars are not certain about the meaning of a few words (for instance, *Selah*). It is not necessary to understand Hebrew in order to understand the meaning of the Psalms.

11. In the New Testament, the Apostles often quote the Psalms using an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (sometimes referred to as the LXX). This version of the Psalms is very important for a number of reasons. Here are four of them. **First**, the Septuagint is the translation of the Bible that was used by the church in the first century. It helps modern Christians understand how the first century Christians would have understood the Psalms. **Second**, the Septuagint provides scholars with additional help in understanding passages that are difficult to understand in Hebrew (see, for instance, Psalm 22:16). By using the Septuagint, modern scholars are able to see how the ancient translator into Greek understood the Hebrew text he was using. **Third**, the Septuagint serves to connect, in a very direct way, the New Testament writings with the writings in the Old Testament. This is because the New Testament books were, like the Septuagint, written in Greek. Words used in the Septuagint are used in the New Testament. The most important of these words is **Christ**. **Fourth**, the Septuagint preserves another connection, in addition to the Hebrew version that is available to readers today, to the original writings (or **autographs**) of the Scripture. In fact, there are places where scholars have determined that the text in the Septuagint is clearly superior to the Hebrew Text that is available to scholars today. Scholars have worked diligently to incorporate what they have learned from the Septuagint into the versions that are available to readers today. It is not necessary to understand the Greek used in the Septuagint in order to understand the meaning of the Psalms.

12. Many of the Psalms include superscriptions. A superscription refers to the words that appear before the actual words of the poetry in the Psalm (i.e., “A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON” or “TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES. A PSALM OF DAVID”). These superscriptions should be considered carefully and they should be used in preaching and teaching because they are in the editions of the Bible that we have. There are no ancient manuscripts that do not have

these superscriptions. They are intended to help the reader. The superscriptions were in the editions of the Psalms that were read by the Apostles. However, the Apostles never use the superscriptions in such a way that the superscription determines the meaning of the Psalm. The reader should carefully consider how the New Testament writers do and do not use the superscriptions. Many superscriptions include musical instructions of some kind. These instructions remind the people of God today that the Psalms are intended to be used in corporate worship.

13. The main subject of many of the Psalms is “the Christ”.

The Psalms were written over a period of many hundreds of years. During this time, many kings reigned. However, the Psalms do not focus on MANY different kings. They focus on ONE particular King. The identity of this one King is first announced in **Psalm 2**. He is the Anointed of the LORD—the Christ.

This **doesn't mean** that the Christ is the only subject of the Psalms. And **it doesn't mean** that every Psalm is about the Christ and the gospel event in the same way. **It does, however, mean** that an understanding of the Christ and the gospel event should influence how every Psalm is seen. Evidence that the Christ is the main subject of the Psalms is found throughout the New Testament. See, for instance, Luke 24:44, John 5:46, Acts 3:18-24, and 1 Peter 1:10-12.

While the Psalms are about the Christ and the gospel message, they are not narratives (like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and they are not epistles (like Romans or Colossians). They are not meant to be read like narratives or epistles. The Psalms are poems (see #5). The **poetry** of the Psalms and the **message** of the Psalms combine to beautifully tell the story of the Christ and of his people. The poetry of the Psalms keeps the believer from having a “mechanical” view of the Christ and of the gospel event that is disconnected from true feeling. The Psalms bring the Christ and the gospel event close to the reader. The poetry allows the reader to enter into the suffering of the Christ. The reader hears the groaning of the Christ and feels his distress. The reader sees the Christ's delight in his relationship with Yahweh and his delight in the people of Yahweh. The poetry of the Psalms allows the reader to pray along with the Christ. The poetry of the Psalms allows the reader to encounter, face to face, the enemies of the Christ.

14. No one Psalm completely describes the Christ. While Psalm 2 introduces the Christ and teaches a great deal about him, it is not

complete. Other Psalms add a great deal of information about the Christ. Thus, the reader is to build his or her “theology of the Christ” from Psalm to Psalm. The reader is not to “reinvent the King” in every Psalm. For instance, what is learned about the King in Psalm 2 should be remembered when the reader reads Psalm 3. The very different descriptions of the Christ are sometimes difficult to reconcile. It is the joy of the reader and the obligation of the preacher to reconcile these very different descriptions of the King.

15. The Psalms include a great deal of variety. Like a concert with many types of music, the Psalter includes many different types of Psalms. The different Psalms present the Christ and the gospel event from many angles. It is the joy of the reader and the obligation of the preacher to discover those angles.

16. Readers should carefully consider how the Apostles quote the Psalms. The Apostles are to be seen as utterly trustworthy guides to the meaning of the Old Testament. By his words to the Apostles in the Upper Room, it is clear that Jesus Christ wants his followers to know that the teaching of the Apostles recorded in the Scriptures is true and reliable.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” **John 14:26**

“I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” **John 16:12-15**

Based on Jesus’ words in John 14:26 and 16:12-15, the Christian should accept the teaching of the Apostles that is based on the Psalms as true and reliable.

17. David, the author of many of the Psalms, knew that he was writing about the Christ. David was a prophet (Acts 2:30). According to the Apostle Peter, all of the prophets were foretelling the days of the Christ and the gospel event (see Acts 3:18-24 and Acts 10:43). According to Peter, the prophets knew that their words would be a great help to people who were yet to come (see 1 Peter 1:10-12). This means that David, as a prophet, knew that he was writing about the Christ and he knew that his words would be a help

to a people who came after him. See also Peter's words regarding David in Acts 2:29-31. See also Christ's words regarding David in Mark 12:35-37. It is significant that David calls the Christ his "Lord" in Psalm 110:1. This demonstrates that David knew that there was a king who was greater than he was. All of the Psalms should be read in this light.

David's "last words" in 2 Samuel 23:1-7 also indicate that he knew that he was writing about the Christ (see charts on pages 127 and 128). While the most commonly used Hebrew Text (sometimes referred to as the Masoretic Text or "MT") renders these verses in such a way that David seems to be referring to himself as "the anointed of the God of Jacob" and "the sweet psalmist of Israel", this is probably not how the text should be read. The Septuagint translates these same verses in a very different way, indicating that David was raised up so that he might write songs about the Christ! He says that he was "raised up **concerning** the anointed of the God of Jacob and the beautiful psalms of Israel". **In other words, David says that he was raised up by God so that he might write Psalms for God's people about the Christ.** Thus, 1 Samuel begins with a poem about the Christ (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10), and 2 Samuel ends with a poem about the Christ (see 2 Samuel 23:1-7). In between these two poems, in the middle of these books (2 Samuel 7:1-17), is a promise from Yahweh regarding the coming of the Christ! **It would be very strange for David to celebrate himself when the book of 1-2 Samuel is pointing to a greater King!**

18. Jesus and the Apostles clearly read the Psalms in a messianic way. The reader should carefully consider how Jesus and the Apostles refer to the book of Psalms. All of the Psalms which they do quote they relate to Jesus Christ, or his people, or the enemies of God, or the gospel event. There are NO EXAMPLES of the Apostles interpreting a Psalm that is non-Messianic and non-gospel oriented. The Apostles NEVER say that a Psalm's final meaning concerns the events that were taking place in Israel during the time period when that particular Psalm was written. This does not mean that the Apostles were ignorant of the historical situation. The superscriptions that appear before many of the Psalms were in the editions that the Apostles would have been using. It does mean, however, that they pass over the historical situation without comment. Clearly, the Apostles do not feel that this is the most important meaning of the Psalms. Jesus, also, almost completely ignores the historical

situation when he refers to the Psalms. When Jesus or the Apostles do refer to the historical situation, they only do so to correct the misunderstandings of their audience.

Outlined below are direct quotations from the Psalms that are found in the gospels. **It is significant to note that all of the Psalms quoted below relate to Jesus Christ, or his people, or the enemies of God, or the gospel event.**

Matthew: Matthew 4:6 (see Psalm 91:11-12),³ Matthew 7:23 (see Psalm 6:8), Matthew 13:32 (see Psalm 104:12), Matthew 13:35 (see Psalm 78:2), Matthew 16:27 (see Psalm 62:12), Matthew 21:9 (see Psalm 118:25-26 and Psalm 148:1), Matthew 21:16 (see Psalm 8:2), Matthew 21:42 (see Psalm 118:22-23), Matthew 22:44 (Psalm 110:1), Matthew 23:39 (see Psalm 118:26), Matthew 26:38 (see Psalm 42:5-6), Matthew 27:35 (see Psalm 22:18), Matthew 27:46 (see Psalm 22:1).

Mark: Mark 4:32 (see Psalm 104:12), Mark 11:9 (see Psalm 118:25-26), Mark 11:10 (see Psalm 148:1), Mark 12:10 (see Psalm 118:22-23), Mark 12:36 (Psalm 110:1), Mark 14:34 (see Psalm 42:5-6), Mark 15:24 (see Psalm 22:18), Mark 15:34 (see Psalm 22:1).

Luke: Luke 4:10-11 (see Psalm 91:11-12), Luke 13:19 (see Psalm 104:12), Luke 13:27 (see Psalm 6:8), Luke 13:35 (see Psalm 118:26), Luke 19:38 (see Psalm 118:26), Luke 20:17 (Psalm 118:22), Luke 20:42 (Psalm 110:1), Luke 23:34 (see Psalm 22:18), Luke 23:46 (see Psalm 31:5).

John: John 2:17 (see Psalm 69:9), John 6:31 (see Psalm 105:40), John 10:34 (see Psalm 82:6), John 12:13 (see Psalm 118:25-26), John 15:25 (see Psalm 35:19), John 19:24 (see Psalm 22:18), John 19:36 (see Psalm 34:20).

19. The Apostles do not quote every Psalm. Every Psalm that is quoted by the Apostles is somehow related to the Christ, his people, or the gospel event. However, the Apostles do not quote every Psalm. This does not mean that readers today cannot use, interpret, or

³ Even Satan read the Psalms in a messianic way! In the wilderness temptation of Jesus, Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12, demonstrating that he understood this Psalm to be a promise to the true "Son of God" (see Matthew 4:6 and Psalm 91:11-12). It is significant that Jesus does not correct Satan's understanding of Psalm 91. Jesus knows that this Psalm truly does apply to him. It is also significant that this Psalm includes the following promise: "You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot" (Psalm 91:13). This is a reference to the promise by God of "the serpent's" ultimate defeat in Genesis 3:15! Jesus is the one who fulfills the promise originally made in Genesis 3:15.

preach from these Psalms. The reader should know that the Apostles would have used every Psalm to preach the gospel and to celebrate the Christ.

20. The Apostles want the reader to use the Old Testament.

Based on their usage of the Psalms (and the rest of the Old Testament), it is clear that the Apostles spent a great deal of time studying the Psalms (and the Old Testament). When the Apostles quote a Psalm, they are expecting the reader to read the entire Psalm and to carefully study that Psalm in context. For instance, in Matthew 27, the Apostle Matthew repeatedly refers to Psalm 22. He wants the reader to go to Psalm 22 and to study the entire Psalm carefully. He is sending a signal to his readers that the entire Psalm pertains to the events taking place at the crucifixion.

21. The Psalms focus a great deal of attention on the enemies of God and on the enemies of the Christ.

This begins with the very first verse of the Psalter. The focus on the enemies of God's people isn't just in the text of the Psalms. It may also be seen in the superscriptions appearing before many Psalms (i.e., "A PSALM OF DAVID. WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON.").

22. The suffering of the Christ is a major theme in the Psalms.

At least 30 of the first 41 Psalms in book 1 of the Psalms (Psalms 1-41) detail the suffering of one man (the Anointed King) and his cries for deliverance. Christians need to be reminded of Christ's sufferings and to see how he responded to them for at least two reasons. First, Christ's suffering and death purchased forgiveness and life for all of God's people. His sufferings should lead to thankfulness, worship, and praise. Second, Christians have been called to share in the sufferings of Christ. Thus, constant reminders of Christ's sufferings are necessary so that Christians do not think something strange is happening to them when they suffer (see 1 Peter 4:12-13).

23. The Christian can, because he or she is "in Christ", truly identify with the main character of many of the Psalms.

While the anointed King of God's people is the primary subject of many of the Psalms, the people of God have, for thousands of years, read the Psalms with themselves as the subject. One reason this is true has already been noted: the poetry of the Psalms "invites" the reader to see himself or herself as the subject of the Psalm. However, this is not the only reason Christians are able to personally identify with the Psalms (even though many of them are about the Christ). Christians

have been identified with Christ. His life is the life of the Christian. The Apostle Paul explains this in, for example, Romans 12:1-11, Ephesians 2:4-6, and Colossians 3:1-4. Because the Christian is “in Christ”, the things that are true of him may also be truly spoken of the Christian.

Therefore, because of the gospel event, the writers of the Scriptures take things that uniquely apply to the Christ and apply them to those who are “in Christ”. This means that Psalms that are uniquely about the Christ can be used in reference to the saints. For instance, in Psalm 2, the Christ is referred to as God’s “Son”. This Psalm is quoted many times in reference to Christ alone. However, it is also quoted in reference to the saints. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, he is not the only “son of God”. He has brought many “sons to glory” (see Hebrews 2:10 and Romans 8:14). This is why later writers are able to take verses that apply to the Christ in Psalm 2 and apply them to the saints. For instance, Psalm 2:9 uniquely applies to the Christ. It is quoted, in reference to Jesus, in Revelation 12:5 and Revelation 19:15. However, in Revelation 2:26-27, this verse is applied to the saints! Psalm 2:7 is another verse that clearly pertains to the Christ. Yet it is used by the Apostle John in Revelation 21:7 in reference to the saints. Again, because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, the believer truly is identified with Christ.

24. The “main character” in the Psalms is to be imitated. The person speaking in the Psalms demonstrates how a godly man or woman is to live, suffer, pray, worship, trust God, and repent.

25. The Christ is the worship leader of God’s people. This aspect of Christ’s ministry is often overlooked because of his role as our Sacrifice, Savior, and King. The Psalms clearly demonstrate that the Christ delights in worshipping God and in leading the people of God in worship, whether that worship is seen in lament, in trust, in thanksgiving, or in praise. Thus, the Psalms should be seen as a demonstration of Jesus’ love for God the Father and of his great desire to see all of God’s people worship God in spirit and in truth in every circumstance of life. The Psalms teach us how Jesus would, if he were on earth with the church today, lead his people in worship.

Psalms 1 ...

... is the first Psalm in the Psalter; therefore, it is of special significance. The final editor of the Psalms (the person or people who put the Psalms in their final order) put this Psalm first for a particular reason. Thus, this Psalm serves as *the introduction* to the entire Psalter. Psalm 1 summarizes the message found within the Psalter. Psalm 1 also prepares the reader for what he or she will see in the rest of the Psalms.

... describes the people for whom all of the Psalms were written. The Psalter is the song book of those people who have been blessed by God. These people are distinguished by the fact that they (1) resist evil, (2) carefully listen to, delight in, and act upon God's good words as outlined in "the law of the LORD", (3) are constantly nourished by God, (4) bear great fruit, and (5) are able to stand in the judgment because they are known by God and have been blessed by him.

... focuses attention on two kinds of people in the world: those who are wicked and those who are righteous. This particular Psalm does not (at least directly) call the wicked to repentance (while Psalm 2 does call the wicked to repentance - see Psalm 2:10-12). Rather, it offers help and encouragement to the righteous so that they might live hope-filled lives even in the midst of great suffering. This Psalm is intended to build the faith of the righteous. God will reward those who resist evil and carefully listen to, delight in, and act upon his good words as outlined in the Scriptures.

... focuses attention on the present activities of the righteous and on the present activities of the wicked. The righteous are presently avoiding evil and are meditating upon and obeying God's good words as outlined in the Scriptures, while the wicked are presently thinking about and doing evil.

... focuses attention on the fruitfulness of the righteous and on the lack of fruit produced by the wicked. The righteous are so fruitful that the psalmist compares them to a tree carefully planted next to an irrigation ditch. The wicked are so unfruitful that they are compared to chaff that is blown away by the wind.

... focuses attention on the future destiny of the wicked and on the future destiny of the righteous. There will be a judgment. This judgment is based on the "way" (manner of life) of a person. Some people will be declared to be righteous by Yahweh at the judgment, and some people will be declared guilty. The righteous will be rewarded by Yahweh, while the wicked will be judged by Yahweh.

... begins with a focus on the importance of close meditation upon God's word. All three sections in the Hebrew Old Testament (the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—see Luke 24:44) begin with an emphasis on the goodness of God's word and on the importance of close meditation on and obedience to God's word. **The Law** begins by emphasizing that God creates all things by his word, that he declares what is good and evil by his word, and that mankind must obey his word (see Genesis 1-3). **The Prophets** begin with words directed to Joshua. He is commanded to meditate on God's good words and to obey them: "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 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" (Joshua 1:7-8). Psalm 1 is the beginning of **The Psalms** (sometimes called The Writings), the third section of the Hebrew Bible. Like Joshua 1, Psalm 1 focuses on the blessing that comes to the one who **meditates on God's word day and night**.

... does not include a superscription (introductory words like "a Psalm of David"). In book 1 of the Psalms (1-41), only Psalms 1, 2, 10, and 33 do not include superscriptions. The lack of a superscription seems to demonstrate that Psalm 1 is set apart from the Psalms that follow it. This is one indication that this Psalm is an introduction to the rest of the Psalter.

... quotes Joshua 1:8. The command given to Joshua when he was commissioned to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land should be carefully studied when studying this Psalm, for it is clear that the psalmist is connecting the "Blessed Man" in Psalm 1, at least in some way, with Joshua. Joshua was the one chosen by Yahweh to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua could not, however, give the people final rest from all of their enemies. By quoting the command to Joshua, it would appear that the psalmist is sending a signal to his readers that the "Blessed Man", like Joshua, is the one chosen by Yahweh to lead the people of God into his Promised Land. Unlike Joshua, however, the "Blessed Man" will be successful and will fully accomplish his task.

... is not directly quoted in the New Testament. Psalm 1 is, however, quoted in Jeremiah 17:7-8 and Ezekiel 47:12. The passages that are tied to Psalm 1 should be carefully studied.

Psalm 1

1

Blessed⁴ is the man⁵
 who walks not in the counsel⁶ of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,

⁴ “Blessed” is a description of the love, favor, mercy, approval, companionship, joy, fruitfulness, and help from God that is poured upon the person who is “blessed” by him. It is God’s kindness, in all its forms, showered upon the person of his choosing (see Exodus 34:6-7a).

Psalm 1:1 begins by describing the “blessed” man. Psalm 2 (which, like Psalm 1, is an introductory Psalm) concludes by describing the “blessed” people: “**Blessed** are all who take refuge in him” (2:12). These two uses of “Blessed” form an envelope connecting Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. This envelope demonstrates that both Psalms are about the **identity**, the **actions**, and the **destiny** of those people who are blessed by Yahweh. Both Psalms are also about the **identity**, the **actions**, and the **destiny** of those who oppose God and his people.

After these two introductory uses of **blessed**, the word **blessed** is further defined throughout the Psalms. See Psalm 32:1-2 (Paul quotes these verses in Romans 4:5-8), 33:12, 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 65:4, 84:4-5, 84:12, 89:15-16, 94:12-13, 106:3, 112:1, 119:1-3, 127:5, 128:1-2, 137:8-9, 144:15, and 146:5.

⁵ The word **man** can refer to people (both male and female) in general. In other words, this Psalm refers to any individual (whether male or female) who is blessed by God.

However, this is not the only way this Psalm can be read. It is significant to note that the Psalm is calling attention to a **man** who has blamelessly walked before God. This man has resisted evil and evildoers and has delighted in God’s word. Because of this, he has become like a fruitful tree. This man is doing all that God created man to do (see Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm 8). Readers of both the Old and New Testament know that, from the time of Adam’s sin, such a man has never existed (see Psalm 14 and Romans 3:9-18). The things spoken in Psalm 1 can truly be spoken of Jesus alone. He alone is absolutely blameless. He alone, of all people on earth, has avoided evil and has delighted in the law of the LORD day and night. **Jesus truly is THE blessed man.** However, because of his death and resurrection, the things spoken in Psalm 1 are also true of all those who, by faith, are counted as “in Christ”. Thus, the believer is considered “blessed” because he or she is **in** the “blessed man”—Jesus. The Psalms are the songs and prayers of **THE** blessed man (Jesus) **and** of **THE** blessed people who are only blessed because they are “in him”.

⁶ The wicked have plans (“counsel”) that the blessed man does not participate in. The plans of the wicked are not specified in Psalm 1. The plans of the wicked are, however, specified in Psalm 2. Their plan is to rebel against the rule of Yahweh and against the rule of his Anointed King, the Christ (Messiah in Hebrew). Psalm 1, then, refers to the “counsel” of the wicked but does not describe the nature of their wicked counsel. Psalm 2 does describe the nature of their wicked counsel. The specific actions that the wicked take in order to fulfill their evil plans are more fully described in the rest of the Psalter. In the same way, the specific actions that Yahweh takes in order to deliver the Christ from his enemies and to put him in the place of greatest fruitfulness are more fully described in the rest of the Psalter.

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;⁷

2

but his delight⁸ is in the law of the LORD,⁹

⁷ Psalm 1 begins with a brief mention of a righteous person (“Blessed is the man”) who has been resisting entire groups of wicked people (“who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers”). This introductory verse sets a theme for the entire Psalter. **Many times, a Psalm focuses on one righteous person who is suffering at the hands of many wicked enemies even though the righteous person has committed no evil.** This, of course, perfectly describes the sufferings of Christ. Though innocent, he stood alone, suffering at the hands of the wicked (see Psalm 26:4-5). This also describes the sufferings of those who are “in Christ”. In this way, Psalm 1 can truly be used to describe the sufferings (and deliverance) of THE blessed man—Christ, and, at the same time, to describe the sufferings (and deliverance) of those blessed people who have been declared righteous because they are in Christ.

See Proverbs 21:24 for a helpful definition of the “scoffer”.

⁸ The blessed man finds great pleasure in thinking about and obeying “the law of the LORD”. Delight in the Scriptures is a mark of the saints. They love God’s words. Beyond this, delight in the “law of the LORD” is vitally connected to the other things that take place in this Psalm. Delight in the “law of the LORD” is connected to the blessed person’s ability to withstand evil (verse 1), to the blessed person producing an abundance of fruit (verse 3), and to the blessed person receiving a favorable verdict at the final judgment (verses 5-6).

In regard to the blessed man who perfectly delights in God’s law, carefully read Moses’s words in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. In this passage, Moses provides detailed instructions about the king whom the Israelites were to set over them. According to Moses, the only king who was fit to rule over God’s people was one who would diligently read God’s law “all the days of his life” and obey it. As the books of 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, and 1-2 Chronicles demonstrate, none of the Israelite kings perfectly fulfilled Moses’s words.

Jesus is the King who fulfills this passage. He is THE KING who perfectly delights in God’s law and perfectly obeys it. The story of Jesus in the temple at age 12 demonstrates that, even from a very young age, he loved meditating on God’s words (see Luke 2:41-52). The rest of Jesus’ life confirms his perfect love of and obedience to God’s words (see Matthew 5:17-20 and John 4:34). Jesus can be trusted as our King because he perfectly follows God’s words. He is the “blessed man” above all blessed men and women. See also Psalm 119:35, 47, 92, and 97.

⁹ Psalm 1 answers the question, “**What** is the rule for mankind?” The answer is “the Law of the LORD”. Psalm 2 answers a related question: “**Who** is the ruler over mankind?”

and on his law he meditates¹⁰ day and night.¹¹

3

He is like a tree

planted by streams of water¹²

¹⁰ The righteous person is **meditating** on “the law of the LORD”. It is always on his mind and tongue. The wicked, however, **meditate** on evil. It is significant to note that the word translated “plot” in Psalm 2:1 (“the peoples **plot** in vain”) is the same word that is translated “meditates” in Psalm 1:2. Thus, the righteous **meditate** on God’s law, but the wicked **meditate** on throwing off God’s rule and the rule of his King. This overthrow, of course, will not happen. As Psalm 2:1 makes clear, the meditation of the wicked is “in vain”.

The prophet Jeremiah refers to Psalm 1 in Jeremiah 17:7-8. He does not, however, refer to **meditating** on the law of Yahweh. Rather, he speaks of **trust** in Yahweh: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD”. Based on Jeremiah’s use of Psalm 1, to **meditate** on the law of the LORD is equivalent to having **faith** in Yahweh.

¹¹ The words “**he meditates day and night**” are drawn from the book of Joshua (see Joshua 1:8). The psalmist is, in some way, making a connection between the “Blessed Man” in Psalm 1 and Joshua, for the command to meditate day and night was originally spoken to him. Joshua was the one chosen by Yahweh to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua could not, however, change the hearts of the people. He was, as the writer to the Hebrews says, ultimately not able to bring the people into “God’s rest” (see Hebrews 4:8). It would appear that the psalmist is sending a signal to his readers that the “Blessed Man”, like Joshua, is the one chosen by Yahweh to lead the people of God into his Promised Land. Unlike Joshua, however, the “Blessed Man” will be successful.

To meditate on the law of the LORD “**day and night**” is to meditate on it continually. It is significant that the Psalms immediately following the two introductory Psalms picture the Christ crying out to Yahweh **in the day** and **in the night** (see Psalm 3:5, 4:8, 5:3, and 6:6). He is doing exactly what is spoken of in Psalm 1:2! It is important to note that, in these Psalms, the Christ is meditating on the law of the LORD even in the midst of great suffering. The meditation of the Christ on the law of the LORD should be imitated by all those who are in him. Even in the midst of great suffering, the people of God must be meditating on his good words. If the people of God do not meditate on God’s good words, they will not be able to persevere. The emphasis on the Christ’s meditation during the day and the night may be why the editor positioned Psalms 3-6 so close to Psalm 1.

¹² The blessed man is extremely fruitful. He is compared to a tree that a **gardener** purposely plants next to an irrigation ditch. The result of the gardener’s care is that the tree is constantly being nourished so that it might bear fruit even in times of drought.

Carefully consider John 15:1-11 in connection with these verses. Because Jesus is THE blessed man, he also is abundantly fruitful. All those who are in him bear much fruit because he is the fruitful one. Psalm 1 can truly be used to describe the fruitfulness of THE blessed man Christ, and, at the same time, to describe the fruitfulness of those blessed people who have been made fruitful because they are in Christ. In regard to the fruit that appears in the life of the believer, see Galatians 5:22-23.

Jeremiah quotes a portion of this Psalm in Jeremiah 17:7-8: “**He is like a tree planted by water**, that sends out its roots by the **stream**”. This water is called “living water” in Jeremiah 17:13. See also Jesus’ words in John 4:7-15 and 7:37-39 and the Apostle John’s words in Revelation 7:17, 21:6, and 22:17.

that yields its fruit in its season,¹³
 and its leaf does not wither.¹⁴
 In all that he does, he prospers.¹⁵

4

The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.¹⁶

5

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;¹⁷

¹³ The tree, because of the care of the gardener, is very fruitful. Notice, however, that the fruit doesn't appear instantly. Rather, it appears "in its season". Verse three, then, guarantees the **future** fruitfulness of the blessed man. This was true of the Christ. He did not appear to bear lasting fruit during his earthly ministry. Because of his death and resurrection, however, he is still bearing fruit today! Sometimes, we, even as Christians, may be tempted to despair because we do not see any "fruit" and our efforts appear to be "fruitless". However, we must have faith that God will keep his word. Delight in God's word in the present time **will** result in fruitfulness "in its season".

¹⁴ Ezekiel quotes a portion of this verse in Ezekiel 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." Ezekiel's words are in a section of his book relating to an enormous temple that will be built in the last days. This temple represents Christ and those who are in him (see John 2:18-22, 4:19-24, 7:37-39, Ephesians 2:19-22, and 1 Peter 2:4-8). The Apostle John quotes Ezekiel's words in Revelation 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." John calls this tree "**the tree of life**". Thus, a connection is made between the tree planted by streams of water in Psalm 1 and the tree of life first described in Genesis 2:9. This Psalm is a picture of the true tree of life—THE Blessed Man, Jesus! It is also a picture of all those who are in him!

¹⁵ God causes the blessed man to succeed. This cannot mean that the blessed person will never suffer. The Psalm started by hinting at the suffering of the righteous. Suffering becomes a major focus as early as Psalm 3! This means that God causes the person, in any circumstance (even suffering), to succeed in accomplishing his good purposes. See Romans 8:31-39.

¹⁶ The wicked are not fruitful. Their work bears no evidence of God's help and blessing. Because of their lack of fruit, the wicked will be judged. See also Job 21:18.

¹⁷ Verse 5 moves from the present activities of the righteous and of the wicked to the time of the **final judgment**. At that time, the wicked will be judged. Because of their wickedness, they will be declared guilty and will not be allowed to remain among the "congregation of the righteous". See Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 21:36, and Revelation 20:11-15.

6

for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,¹⁸
but the way of the wicked will perish.¹⁹

¹⁸ Righteous means, in the context of this Psalm, one who **does** meditate on God's law day and night **and** who **does not** walk in sin.

¹⁹ The righteous are able to take hope because the temporary "victories" of the wicked will come to an end. The "way" of the wicked will perish, even if it seems to be succeeding at the present moment. But the "way" of the righteous will be fruitful and will result in eternal life, even if it seems to be failing at the present moment.

Psalm 2 ...

... is, like Psalm 1, meant to be an introductory Psalm.

This Psalm has been purposely placed second in the Psalter because of its great importance. Psalm 2 introduces the theme of God's anointed King (the Christ) to the Psalms. This theme is developed and celebrated throughout the Psalter. However, the theme of the Christ is *introduced* and *summarized* in Psalm 2.

The fact that Psalm 2 introduces the theme of God's anointed King to the Psalter does not mean that this is the first reference to the Christ in the Old Testament. Every book in the Old Testament is, in some way, about the Christ. It is the joy of the reader and the responsibility of the preacher to discover how the Christ is proclaimed in each book. Regarding Christ being the subject of the Old Testament Scriptures, see Jesus' words in Luke 24:25-27, 24:44-48, John 5:39-40, and 5:46-47.

... serves as an introduction to the Psalms of David. The Psalms of David (a group of Psalms beginning with Psalm 3) should be read with Psalm 2 in mind. Thus, Psalm 2 identifies the king that the reader is to think of when he or she reads the Psalms. In other words, the Psalms of David are not, primarily, **about** David. Rather, they were written **by David about the Christ**—the King identified in Psalm 2. This is evident based on how Jesus refers to the Psalms in general (see Luke 24:44), and how the Apostles interpret various Psalms "of David". See, for instance, Peter's words in Acts 2:22-36. In these verses, Peter quotes two Psalms. He does not say that these Psalms "of David" are **about** David. Rather, he applies both of the Psalms to Jesus.

... is connected to Psalm 1. The two introductory Psalms complement one another. Delight in the "Law of the LORD" (Psalm 1) naturally leads a person to love of the Christ (Psalm 2), because all the Scriptures are about Christ (see, again, Luke 24:25-27 and 24:44-48). Love of the Christ (Psalm 2), naturally leads one to delight in and to obey the "Law of the LORD", because Jesus loves God's words, and will never lead his people to disobey God (see John 14:15). A proper understanding of God is not possible apart from a proper understanding of the importance of his Law (Psalm 1) and his King (Psalm 2).

These two Psalms are further connected because the Christ (described in Psalm 2) should be seen as the ultimate blessed man (described in Psalm 1). God's people can joyfully obey, serve,

worship, and love the Christ because they know that he delights in the law of the LORD day and night. Because of his constant attention to God's words, he will never lead those who follow him to delight in the words of another. See John 4:34 and 14:31.

... naturally follows after Psalm 1. The order of these two Psalms demonstrates that the Christ is not above the "law of the LORD". Rather, as the perfect King, the Christ delights in God's good words, meditating on them day and night. The Christ is the fulfillment of Moses' words regarding the king in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

... further defines the wicked people first described in Psalm 1. In Psalm 1, the wicked are introduced, but Psalm 1 does not talk about the specific things that the wicked people do. In Psalm 2, however, the actions of the wicked are described. They are fighting against God and against his Christ.

... is tied to 2 Samuel 7:1-17. In this important passage, God promises that one of David's "offspring" will rule as King over God's people forever. God promises that this coming King will be a **son** to him: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Samuel 7:14). Because Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17 are both about the **son of God**, they should be read together. In fact, Hebrews 1:5 quotes both passages together, demonstrating that the writer of Hebrews saw these two passages as related. New Testament passages referring to Jesus as the **Son of God** should be read in connection with Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

... is connected to Jesus' baptism. The words recorded in Psalm 2:7 ("You are my Son") are echoed in Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34. Jesus' baptism is the moment when the Christ (spoken of in Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17) was publicly anointed as King over God's people. In the Old Testament, prophets of God anointed the kings of Israel with oil. The oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Samuel 16:13). As God's final and perfect King, however, Jesus was not anointed by a spokesman who was representing God. He was anointed by God himself. And he was not anointed with a symbol of the Holy Spirit. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. God's words from heaven and his anointing with the Holy Spirit aren't the only signs that Jesus is the one referred to in Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7. There are many more signs. In fact, that is why John wrote in his gospel, "Now Jesus did many other **signs** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

but **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

The New Testament clearly proclaims that Jesus is the Christ. Nathanael, one of Jesus’ disciples, proclaims, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49). Peter says, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29). Jesus himself declares that he is the Christ (John 4:25-26). People today are still discovering that Jesus is the Christ and are putting their faith in him.

... is connected to Jesus’ transfiguration. The words recorded in Psalm 2:7 (“You are my Son”) are also echoed in Mark 9:7: “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son; listen to him.’” With these words, God the Father declares, once again, that Jesus is his eternal Son—the Son promised in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 and Psalm 2. The transfiguration, like Jesus’ baptism, is connected to Jesus’ rule and reign in the kingdom of God. At the transfiguration, the Apostles were seeing a vision of “the kingdom of God after it has come with power” (Mark 9:1). They were seeing the “Son” in all his glory. The words spoken by God the Father after he declared that Jesus was his “beloved Son” are also significant. By saying, “listen to him”, God the Father was connecting the “Son” with another person who was to come—the “Prophet” spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Based on the Father’s words, it is clear that Jesus is the Son spoken of by David in Psalm 2 and he is also the Prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18. Regarding Jesus being “the Prophet” see John 6:14, 7:40, Acts 3:22-23, and 7:37.

... is connected to Jesus’ death and resurrection. See Acts 4:23-31.

... is a warning to those who will not follow Christ, but great encouragement to those who do follow him.

... does not include a superscription. While there are no words before the Psalm regarding who wrote this Psalm or when it was written, Acts 4:25 indicates that this Psalm was written by David.

... is quoted (or referenced) in Acts 4:25-26, 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5, Revelation 2:26-27, 12:5, and 19:15. These references to Psalm 2 and the material surrounding these references should be carefully studied.

Psalm 2

1

Why do the nations²⁰ rage²¹
and the peoples plot²² in vain?²³

2

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers²⁴ take counsel together,

²⁰ The nations of the world, when considered as a whole, are not delighting in the “law of the LORD”. Instead, the psalmist declares that the nations are raging against God. Again, in the Psalms, the wicked are portrayed as a great majority (“the nations”), while the righteous are seen as very few. This verse demonstrates that the Psalms (and the rest of the Scriptures) are not songs concerning just one small nation on the earth. The Psalms (and Scriptures) concern the entire world.

²¹ See Psalm 46:6.

²² This is the same word as is used in Psalm 1:2. The “blessed man” **meditates** on the law of the LORD “day and night”. The “peoples” **meditate** on throwing off the rule of Yahweh and of his Christ.

²³ “[I]n vain” means that the the nations and the peoples are meditating upon something that will not and cannot be accomplished. This should give great confidence to the man or woman who delights in the “law of the LORD” and who follows the Christ. No matter how strong the enemies of God and of the Christ might appear to be, the opposition of the wicked is “in vain”.

The poetic combination of “nations” and “peoples” is also seen in Psalm 33:10 and 149:7. These verses are echoes of Psalm 2:1. These Psalms should be studied carefully, for they serve as commentaries on Psalm 2. It is significant to note that Psalm 149:9 declares that “the godly” will “execute on them **the judgment written**”. This seems to be a reference to the judgment of the “nations” and of the “peoples” that was written about in Psalm 2 (see also Revelation 2:26-27). Thus, the second Psalm and the second to the last Psalm are telling the same story!

²⁴ Psalm 2 answers the question, “**Who** is the ruler over mankind?” The answer is Yahweh **and** his Anointed King. The nations do not want Yahweh or his “Anointed” to rule. The “kings of the earth” are opposed to Yahweh and his King (the Christ). They want to throw off their rule (which is outlined in the law of the LORD) and to rule themselves.

against the LORD and against his Anointed,²⁵ saying,

²⁵ This is the first reference to the LORD's "Anointed" in the Psalms. The Hebrew word for "Anointed" is **Messiah** (the Psalms were originally written in Hebrew). The Greek word for "Anointed" is **Christ**. Christ is the word that is typically used in the New Testament because the New Testament was written in Greek. When Jesus was ministering on earth, Jesus' followers **wondered** if he was the Christ. After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, his followers **knew** that he was the Christ. This is why, in later books in the New Testament, the title "Christ" is often "attached" to the name "Jesus" (Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus). Jesus' followers no longer wonder whether he is the Christ. They know, because of his resurrection, that he is the Christ. This is why Matthew, Mark, and John begin as they do (see Matthew 1:1, Mark 1:1, and John 1:17). The first time the word "Anointed" is used in relation to the coming King who would save the people of God is in a poem recorded in 1 Samuel 2:10: "The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his **anointed**". The words in this poem should be carefully studied for they explain how God saves his people by giving power to **his Anointed** (the Christ). These words are closely echoed by Mary the mother of Jesus in Luke 1:46-55. The connection between the poem in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Mary's poem in Luke 1:46-55 is one more proof that Jesus is the Christ who was promised in the Old Testament.

God's "Anointed" is the one whom God has "Anointed" to be King. In the Old Testament, the kings of God's people were anointed by one of God's spokesmen. A prophet would declare that a certain man was the king (see, for instance, 1 Samuel 16:13). God, however, did not use a spokesman when Jesus was anointed as King. At his baptism, God himself declared that Jesus was the King (based on Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17, that is what "my beloved Son" means). In the same way that oil was poured over David, the Holy Spirit was "poured" over Jesus: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:9-11).

Psalm 2:1-2 is quoted in Acts 4:25-26 (from the Septuagint). This passage demands close study. Notice how this passage is translated into English using **past tense verbs**: "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 4 identifies the "nations" and the "peoples" that are referred to in Psalm 2! "Herod and Pontius Pilate" and "the Gentiles" are "the nations" referred to in Psalm 2:1. The Jewish people are "the peoples" referred to in this same verse. Herod and Pontius Pilate are the "kings of the earth" referred to in verse 2. The Jewish leaders are the "rulers" referred to in this same verse. Most importantly, the early Christians considered the "Anointed" in Psalm 2:2 to be Jesus Christ. **The early Christians saw this Psalm as having been fulfilled at the time of Jesus' death!** Jesus died because the Gentile nations and the Jewish people were raging against him! However, he did not stay dead. God raised him to life, proving that the nations did not triumph over Christ. He is, at this very moment, alive, ruling over the nations. This all was part of God's plan.

3

“Let us burst their²⁶ bonds²⁷ apart
and cast away their cords from us.”

4

He who sits²⁸ in the heavens laughs,²⁹
the Lord holds them in derision.³⁰

5

Then he will speak to them in his wrath,³¹
and terrify them in his fury, saying,

²⁶ The LORD (Yahweh) and his Anointed (his Christ) are linked together here. Thus, to resist one is to resist the other.

²⁷ The enemies of Yahweh and of the Christ consider their rule to be bondage. The ones who love Yahweh and the Christ consider their rule to be good and perfect (see Psalm 1:2).

²⁸ Notice the strength of the poetry in this verse. The psalmist could have simply said, “The LORD laughs”. However, by saying, “**He who sits in the heavens** laughs”, the psalmist is emphasizing the fact that Yahweh is, in spite of the raging of the nations, in the position of all power and authority and judgment. His “seat” is not on earth. It is in heaven. His “seat” is no ordinary seat. It is the throne. This is another connection between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. In Psalm 1, the **scoffers** are portrayed as sitting on a seat. Their seat is on earth, and their seat is not a throne. From their “earthly seat”, a position of no power, they are scoffing at the “law of the LORD”, a law that is established in heaven. In Psalm 2, however, Yahweh is also portrayed as sitting. He sits in heaven and he sits upon the throne. From heaven, he looks down on those who oppose him on the earth and he is scoffing at them. He laughs at their futile efforts to throw off his rule and the rule of his Anointed. It is significant to note that other Psalms describe Yahweh sitting on his throne watching all people and executing righteous judgment (see Psalm 9:7-8, 33:13-15, 47:8, 99:1-4, and 113:5-6). The judgment of God should bring great fear to his enemies but great hope to those who love him and obey him.

²⁹ Yahweh isn’t laughing because the rebellion of the nations is funny. He laughs because it is fruitless. The strength of the nations is nothing in comparison to the power of Yahweh and to the power of his Anointed.

³⁰ See Psalm 59:8. This Psalm is referring to Psalm 2.

³¹ The rebellion of the nations against Yahweh and against his Anointed is a sin of the greatest magnitude. This great sin leads to the wrath and fury of Yahweh and of the Christ (see verse 12) being poured out on the rebels. This is another reference to the judgment against the wicked (see Psalm 1:4-6). The wrath of God should not be seen as a demonstration that God is unkind and unloving. God must oppose those who oppose him and who oppose the Christ. If he did not actively war against wickedness, he would, by his inaction, be endorsing it. For God to be good and to be worthy of worship, he must oppose evil.

6

“As for me,³² I have set my King
on Zion,³³ my holy hill.”³⁴

7

I will tell of the decree.³⁵
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;”³⁶

³² The nations want to throw off the rule of Yahweh and of his Anointed. However, Yahweh has done something that will prevent their desires from ever coming to pass. He has, by himself and because it has pleased him to do so, established his King in “Zion”, his royal city. God is portrayed as acting alone in this verse: “As for me ...”. The nations, together, are raging against God. God, alone, does as he pleases.

³³ Zion (Yahweh’s “holy hill”) is one of the major topics in the book of Psalms. The name is first used to describe a city that was, in spite of great opposition, conquered by David (see 2 Samuel 5:6-7). David established his throne in that city. The name “Zion” is used to describe the place where God’s Anointed King rules (see Psalm 78:67-68), where Yahweh is worshipped (Psalm 65:1-2), where Yahweh dwells (Psalm 132:13-18), where people find God (Psalm 84:5-7), where joy and protection are found (Psalm 48), and the place from which God’s blessings flow (Psalm 134:3). Zion is utterly secure (Psalm 125:1-2). Zion is the “home” of God’s people (see Hebrews 12:22-24), and it is ruled by God’s Anointed King. See also Revelation 21:9-22:5.

³⁴ In regard to the one who is fit to live on God’s “holy hill”, see Psalm 15. Because God is perfect, those who live with him must also be perfect. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, those who are counted as “in him” are the only ones who can dwell in God’s holy place.

³⁵ The King, referred to as Yahweh’s “Son”, begins speaking in verse 7. He tells of the moment when he was proclaimed to be King by God. Again, the words in Psalm 2:7 are highly significant and demand close attention. They are directly connected to the words spoken at Jesus’ baptism (see Mark 1:11) and Transfiguration (see Mark 9:7).

³⁶ These words are spoken from heaven when Jesus was baptized: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). The people who were eagerly waiting to know the identity of God’s Anointed King (referred to as the “Son” here) should have recognized these words and they should have known that God was publicly declaring Jesus to be the King spoken of in Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17. These words are repeated at the Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7).

Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, he is not the only “son of God”. He has brought many “sons to glory” (see Romans 8:14 and Hebrews 2:10). This is why later writers are able to take verses that apply to the Christ in Psalm 2 and apply them to the saints. Thus, while Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 clearly pertain to the Christ, these passages are used by the Apostle John in Revelation 21:7 to refer to the saints. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, the believer truly is identified with Christ! See also Revelation 2:26-27 and its connection to Psalm 2:8-9.

today I have begotten you.³⁷

8

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.³⁸

9

You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."³⁹

10

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;⁴⁰
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

³⁷ The phrase "today I have begotten you" is a statement indicating that, at a precise moment in history ("today"), Yahweh declared a certain person to be his "Son" (in other words, his Anointed King). While Jesus was publicly declared to be the King at his baptism and was anointed with the Holy Spirit on that day, the day he actively took the throne as the "Son of God **in power**" was the day of his resurrection. That is why the Apostle Paul says that Jesus "was declared to be **the Son of God in power** according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection from the dead**" (Romans 1:4). Consider also Paul's words in Acts 13: "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'" (Acts 13:32-33). See also Ephesians 1:19-23, Philippians 2:3-11, and Revelation 3:21.

³⁸ It is significant that the first thing that happens when the Christ is set upon his throne is that he is told to ask Yahweh for his inheritance: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession". This "asking" by the Son to the Father has already taken place! Matthew 28:18-20 indicates that Jesus has received all authority and considers the earth to be his possession. Because of this, his disciples are to make disciples of all nations. Thus, Jesus Christ is currently "conquering" the earth **through** his representatives **by** the proclamation of the gospel. At his second coming he will conquer the earth by his own glorious presence. See Revelation 19:11-16 (which includes a quotation from Psalm 2). See also Psalm 82:8.

³⁹ The Christ will conquer all of his enemies. This should bring great comfort to those who have placed their trust in him. The Apostle John quotes this verse in relation to Christ in Revelation 12:5 and 19:15. It is significant to note that the Apostle John also applies Psalm 2:8-9 **to the saints**: "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" (Revelation 2:26-27). The Apostle John is able to apply this Psalm to the saints because they are counted as in Christ and his inheritance is their inheritance. See also Psalm 149:7-9.

⁴⁰ This verse is a call to repentance. It is the first sign in the Psalms that those who are enemies of God and of the Christ can, if they are willing, become "wise" and escape the wrath of Yahweh and the wrath of the Christ. To "be wise" means that one must stop opposing Yahweh and his Christ. To "be wise" means to "Serve the LORD with fear", to "rejoice with trembling" (verse 11), and to "Kiss the Son" (verse 12). To be a fool is to fight against Yahweh and against the Christ.

11

Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12

Kiss the Son,⁴¹
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,⁴²
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed⁴³ are all who take refuge⁴⁴ in him.

⁴¹ The appropriate response to “the Son” is to “Kiss” him. This is not referring to a romantic kiss. This is like the kissing of a king’s feet or the kissing of a king’s ring. It is an acknowledgment of his rule and reign.

⁴² Both Psalms 1 and 2 conclude with a statement about the “way” of a person (see Psalm 1:6). This is another connection between these two Psalms.

⁴³ This last verse is a summary of Psalm 2. It is also, however, a connection to the first verse in Psalm 1. Psalm 1 began by describing the man who is **blessed**. Psalm 2 ends by describing the action that results in people being **blessed**. Like a pair of bookends, these **two uses of the word blessed** hold these two Psalms together. This type of literary construction is called an **envelope**. Envelopes are common in the Bible (see, for instance, Exodus 6:2-8). In this case, the **envelope** created by the two **blessed** words is a signal to the reader that the true meaning of blessedness is found “inside the envelope”. Based on the envelope created by the word **blessed** in 1:1 and the word **blessed** in 2:12, God’s blessing rests on those who, by meditation on Yahweh’s laws day and night, resist evil, recognize the rule of Yahweh’s Son, and, by faith, take refuge in the Son.

⁴⁴ People are to take refuge in the Anointed King. This is a call for people to trust the Christ for safety, protection, and blessing from Yahweh.

Psalm 3 ...

... is not an introductory Psalm. Since Psalms 1 and 2 are introductions to the entire Psalter, Psalm 3 is, in some ways, the first “chapter” of the Psalter. Therefore, the reader should not expect Psalm 3 to “tell as much of the story” as is told in either Psalms 1 or 2.

... tells one part of the story of the Christ. Unlike Psalm 2, which summarizes the story of the Christ, Psalm 3 brings the reader into one part of his story.

... is the first Psalm “of David”. David was more than just the second king of Israel (see 1 and 2 Samuel). He was a poet. He was also a prophet. Because he was anointed as a prophet, David “foresaw” events that were to take place in the future and he wrote Psalms about those events. God used the events in David’s life to help him in his writing. See Peter’s words regarding David and the things he foresaw in Acts 2:30-31. See Peter’s words regarding the message of “all the prophets” in Acts 3:18-25. See also #17 in the introductory section of this book titled, “25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms”.

... is the first Psalm in the Psalter with a superscription. A superscription refers to the words that appear before the actual words of the poetry in the Psalm (in this case, “A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON”).

... records the prayers and praise of one person who is being attacked by many enemies. Based on Psalm 2, the reader of the Psalms should understand that this person with many enemies rising against him is the Anointed King (the Christ). However, this Psalm isn’t just about the Christ. The things spoken in this Psalm also apply to the Christian, because the Christian is “in Christ”.

... provides the reader with an example to follow when he or she suffers persecution. The faith, prayers, and praise demonstrated by the Christ in Psalm 3 are to be imitated by all those who follow Christ.

... is the first in a series of Psalms demonstrating that the Christ meditates on the law of Yahweh in the day and in the night. Psalm 3 is a “day” Psalm (see verse 5). Thus, the Christ describes his actions when he rises in the morning. Psalm 4 is a “night” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ lying down and going to sleep (4:8). Psalm 5 is a “day” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ praying in the morning (5:3). Psalm 6 is a “night” Psalm. The

Psalm describes the Christ flooding his bed with tears (6:6). By putting these Psalms together, the editor seems to be emphasizing that the Christ truly does mediate on the law of Yahweh “**day and night**” (Psalm 1:2). This meditation on the law of Yahweh happens in the midst of great suffering. Those who are in Christ should, like the Christ, be constantly meditating on the law of Yahweh, even during times of great suffering.

... is not directly quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 3

A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON.⁴⁵

1

O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me,⁴⁶

2

many are saying of my soul,

⁴⁵ “OF DAVID” is a common superscription. This appears in 75 of the Psalms. “OF DAVID” does not necessarily mean that David is the subject of the Psalm (i.e., that this Psalm is “about” him). It may mean that he wrote the Psalm about the Christ. One example of this may be seen in how the Apostles refer to Psalm 16, which is a Psalm “of David”. In Acts 2:25-31, the Apostle Peter says that this Psalm was written by David concerning the “resurrection of the Christ”. (See also the Apostle Paul’s words regarding Psalm 16 in Acts 13:35-37.)

The superscriptions serve to tie the historical events of David’s reign (or sometimes other information) with the words that are found in the Psalm. However, even though Psalm 3 is connected in some way to David fleeing from Absalom (see 2 Samuel 13-18), this does not mean that this Psalm is ultimately about David fleeing from Absalom. Rather, this was the circumstance in which David found himself when he wrote this Psalm. God used this event in David’s life so that David might write about the suffering and deliverance of the Christ (and the suffering and deliverance of all those who are “in him”).

The superscription about David fleeing from Absalom provides the reader with a possible hint regarding the interpretation of Psalm 3. The superscription reminds the reader that David’s enemies, when he wrote this, were from his own people! Thus, the reader begins reading the Psalm knowing that the enemies of Yahweh’s Anointed King aren’t just from distant “nations”. They are also from among his own people. This, or course, was very true of Jesus. The Jewish people should have been waiting for the Christ so that they might receive him, listen to him, follow him, love him, and worship him. Instead, they actively opposed him and delivered him to the Gentiles so that he might be killed. This is also true of many Christians today. Often, persecution comes from one’s own family members.

⁴⁶ Psalm 3 records the prayer of one man (note the singular pronouns “my”, “me”, “him”, and “I”) with many thousands of enemies. Who is this one man with the thousands of enemies? The reader should look at the Psalm immediately before Psalm 3 for the answer. Psalm 2:1-2 declares that the nations and the peoples are actively opposing Yahweh’s “Anointed” (the Christ). They do not want the Christ to rule over them and are doing everything they can to “cast” (2:3) his “cords” (rule) from them. It is most natural, then, to see that the man with many enemies in Psalm 3 is the same man as the man with many enemies in Psalm 2—the Christ.

there is no salvation for him in God.⁴⁷ *Selah*⁴⁸

3

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.⁴⁹

4

I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy hill.⁵⁰ *Selah*

5

I lay down and slept;

⁴⁷ We learn something about the enemies of the Christ in this verse. They claim to have knowledge of God. They declare that God will not save the Christ. It is significant to note that the enemies of Jesus also claimed to have knowledge of God. They declared that Jesus' words were blasphemy against God. They mocked Jesus because they were convinced that God would not save him (see Matthew 27:39-43). Old Testament passages prophesying this include Psalm 22:6-8 and Isaiah 53:3-4. Those who are "in Christ" often suffer in similar ways.

⁴⁸ This is the first appearance of the word *Selah* in the Psalter. Scholars do not know exactly what this word means. It is, perhaps, an instruction to the musicians using the Psalms. *Selah* appears 71 times in the Psalms and three times in Habakkuk.

Even though the exact meaning of *Selah* is unknown, it is still, like the superscription before the Psalm, an important part of the Psalm. ***Selah is a reminder that the Psalms aren't just to be read. They are to be used by God's people in an active way.*** They are to be prayed. They are to be sung. They are to be meditated upon. *Selah* reminds the reader that the Psalms are to be used when God's people are gathered together (see, for instance, Nehemiah 12:46).

In addition to this, *Selah* serves as an indication to the reader of the places within a Psalm where the editor saw a transition of some sort.

⁴⁹ In spite of the attacks of the people, the Christ knows that Yahweh is his shield and the one who will exalt him. The Christ knows that he has no good thing apart from Yahweh. In regard to Yahweh being the "lifter" of Christ's head, see Psalm 9:13 and the notes connected to that verse.

⁵⁰ The Christ says that he prayed to Yahweh and Yahweh answered him. The reader should see that the Christ's prayers to Yahweh were based on his faith in Yahweh. The Christ, **knowing** that Yahweh is his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head, prayed to God and his prayers were heard and answered.

Yahweh answered the prayers from his "holy hill". Yahweh's "holy hill" is Zion. This is now the second reference to Zion in the Psalter (see 2:6). Zion is a major theme in the Psalms. This "place" is presented as very real. Zion is presented as utterly secure because it is ruled over by Yahweh and by his Christ. This thought should bring great comfort to the Christian who is suffering. All those who are "in Christ" are counted as citizens of that blessed city (see Hebrews 12:22-24)!

I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.⁵¹

6

I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.⁵²

7

Arise, O LORD!

Save me, O my God!⁵³

For you strike all my enemies⁵⁴ on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.⁵⁵

8

Salvation belongs to the LORD;

⁵¹ This verse demonstrates that the Christ is trusting in Yahweh in the night and in the day. This is a demonstration that he truly is the blessed man described in Psalm 1, meditating on Yahweh's law "day and night" (see also 4:8, 5:3, and 6:6-7). This is perhaps one reason why the editor who arranged the Psalms put these Psalms together.

The Christ declares that he was able to lie down and sleep in confidence because Yahweh "sustained" him. Lying down and sleeping, even in the midst of a tremendous battle, is a poetic way of describing a person's absolute trust in Yahweh. The gospel writers note that Christ was sleeping in the back of the boat during a great storm (see Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25). **Christ sleeping in the back of the boat is one sign that he is the one who fulfills the words written in this Psalm! His sleeping demonstrates his absolute trust in God.** (In regard to Christ's actions being "signs" that he is the Christ, see John 20:30-31.)

⁵² The Christ is not afraid of his enemies because his trust is in Yahweh. He knows that he will be delivered and that they will not succeed in throwing off his rule (see Psalm 2:3).

⁵³ The cry of the Christ in verse 7 should strike great fear into all his enemies, for, according to verse 4, Yahweh answers the prayers of the Christ. It should give great hope to those who love him, for, again, Yahweh answers the prayers of the Christ.

⁵⁴ Christ's enemies are more than just those who persecuted him personally when he was on the earth. His enemies include all those who oppose **his people**. This is why, when Saul was persecuting **the church**, Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **me**?" (Acts 9:4). When a Christian suffers, Christ truly is suffering. Yahweh will not ignore this suffering. See also Paul's words in Colossians 1:24.

⁵⁵ This is a warning to the wicked and a word of encouragement to the righteous. The wicked should repent upon hearing this warning. The righteous are able to rejoice, knowing that the wicked will be judged but the righteous will be delivered. Regarding the judgment of the wicked, see Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:11-15. As the first three Psalms demonstrate, the judgment of the wicked is a major theme in the book of Psalms.

your blessing⁵⁶ be on your people!⁵⁷ *Selah*

⁵⁶ The blessing of God upon his people has been a theme of the first three Psalms.

⁵⁷ Only at the end of the Psalm do we find a reference to the people of Yahweh. Thus, the Psalm focuses on the suffering and deliverance of one man—the Christ. However, it concludes with a call from the Christ for blessing to be poured out upon all of Yahweh's people. As was already demonstrated, Yahweh answers the prayers of the Christ. This is a pattern that may be seen in many Psalms. Psalms following this pattern focus on the suffering and deliverance of one man (the Christ). However, after focusing on the suffering and deliverance of this one man, the psalmist suddenly refers to a group of people (see, for instance, Psalm 22:22 or Psalm 109:30). The lives of MANY people depend on the life of ONE person—Yahweh's Anointed King. This, of course, is true of God's people. Our lives depend on the suffering and deliverance of the Christ. His life, death, and resurrection is the reason we have life. If Christ was not delivered by God, there would be no people of God! But because of his life, death and resurrection, the number of God's people are like the dust of the earth (see Genesis 13:16)! Because of the suffering and deliverance of the Christ, blessing is able to come upon God's people!

Psalm 4 ...

... records the prayers of one person who is being attacked by many enemies. Based on Psalm 2 (and 3), the reader of the Psalms should understand that this one person with many enemies rising against him is Yahweh's Anointed King (the Christ).

... includes a plea from the Christ for his attackers to turn from their sin.

... provides the reader with an example to follow when he or she suffers persecution. As with Psalm 3, the faith, prayers, and praise demonstrated by the Christ in Psalm 4 are to be imitated by all those who follow Christ.

... is the second in a series of Psalms demonstrating that the Christ meditates on the law of Yahweh in the day and in the night. Psalm 3 is a "day" Psalm (see verse 5). Thus, the Christ describes his actions when he rises in the morning. Psalm 4 is a "night" Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ lying down and going to sleep (4:8). Psalm 5 is a "day" Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ praying in the morning (5:3). Psalm 6 is a "night" Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ flooding his bed with tears (6:6). By putting these Psalms together, the editor seems to be emphasizing that the Christ truly does meditate on the law of Yahweh "**day and night**" (Psalm 1:2). This meditation on the law of Yahweh happens in the midst of great suffering. Those who are in Christ should, like the Christ, be constantly meditating on the law of Yahweh, even during times of great suffering.

... is quoted in the New Testament in Ephesians 4:26.

Psalm 4

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS.⁵⁸ A
PSALM OF DAVID.

1

Answer me when I call,⁵⁹ O God of my righteousness!⁶⁰

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious⁶¹ to me and hear my prayer!⁶²

2

O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?

⁵⁸ This superscription is a reminder that the Psalms are to be used by God's people when they are gathered together. The Psalms are to be read, preached from, meditated upon, sung, and prayed.

⁵⁹ **Prayer** is a major theme in the Psalms. This theme was first introduced in Psalm 3: "I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill" (3:4). It is a theme of the next Psalm: "Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch" (5:1-3). The Psalms demonstrate that the Christ will be a man of prayer. Jesus demonstrated that he is the Christ by constantly praying to God (see Mark 1:35). The prayer life of the Christ is to be imitated by his people. The righteous man or woman must be praying. The Psalms demonstrate that God answers prayer.

⁶⁰ This is the first Psalm that speaks of the **righteousness** of the Christ. The King is not righteous merely in his own eyes. Rather, he declares that God is the source of his righteousness. Those who would follow and obey the Christ need to know that **he is righteous** because this gives us confidence in the Christ's standing before God. The righteousness of the King is important because, in later Psalms, the Christ asks Yahweh to judge him "according to" his righteousness (see Psalm 7:8, 18:20, and 18:24). Only one man in all of human history could make this request of God, because only one man in human history is righteous. Jesus alone is without sin (see Romans 3:9-18). He is the only one who could be examined by God and declared righteous. The righteousness of Jesus was confirmed at Jesus' baptism when God the Father spoke the following words from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; **with you I am well pleased**" (Mark 1:11). In Psalm 35:27, the King refers to those who "delight in" his righteousness. Followers of Jesus delight in his sinless life because his perfect life is the reason he was able to be the perfect sacrifice for God's people. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, all those who are "in Christ" are counted as righteous (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

⁶¹ This is an example of the theology that is taught in the Psalms. Answered prayer is grace from God. God is not obligated to answer prayer. He answers prayer because he is gracious.

⁶² Like Psalm 3, Psalm 4 records the words of one person. The attentive reader should know that this one person is the Christ. Verse 1 records the prayer of the Christ. The exact request of this prayer is not listed in verse 1. However, based on the rest of Psalm 4, it would appear that the Christ is praying that God would cause people who dishonor him to turn from their sin and to honor the Christ (see verses 3 and 4).

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?⁶³ *Selah*

3

But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;⁶⁴
the LORD hears when I call to him.⁶⁵

4

Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.⁶⁶ *Selah*⁶⁷

⁶³ In verse 2, the Christ is no longer praying. Now, his words are addressed to those who hate him (“O men”). This is a demonstration of the mercy of the Christ! He is calling those who hate him to turn from their wickedness. The words of the Christ are directed to all people, in all nations (see 2:1), from all time periods. The words of the Christ must be obeyed. His desire is to show mercy to all people, however, they must turn from their sin, honor him, and obey his commands.

The sin of the people is that they have not honored Christ as King. Rather, they have turned his honor into shame. They have loved “vain” words (this word is also used in 2:1) and they have sought after a “lie”. The word translated “lies” in the ESV (the version used here) is singular in both the Hebrew and the Septuagint (Greek), therefore, this seems to be referring to one lie. The one lie the Christ is referring to is probably the lie that the nations and the peoples can throw off the rule of the Christ and become rulers themselves (see 2:3). Those who trust in Jesus no longer believe the “lie” that they can rule themselves. They have come to believe “the word of truth” (see Ephesians 1:13).

⁶⁴ The first command from the Christ is that the people are to rightly honor him by recognizing the position that Yahweh has given to him: “But **know** that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself”. **The King is not referring to many godly people in this verse.** The word translated “godly” is a masculine **singular** noun (in the Hebrew and in the Greek). Therefore, the Christ is referring to one specific godly person—himself. This is made clear in the next clause, “the LORD hears when **I** call to him”.

⁶⁵ “[T]he LORD hears” means Yahweh **listens to** and **answers** the prayers of the King. This should bring great joy, comfort, and security to all of God’s people, because their life and security rests in the hands of their King. If Yahweh doesn’t listen to and answer his prayers, they will not be able to survive. The New Testament teaches that Christ is, right now, at the right hand of God the Father, “interceding for us” (see Romans 8:34). The Father hears Christ’s prayers as he intercedes for us!

⁶⁶ The second command from the King is that the people are to, “Be angry, and do not sin”. This is not a command from the King for people to be angry in general. Rather, this appears to be a command for people **to be angry about the sin referred to in verse 2.** Specifically, people are to be angry about the sin of dishonoring the Christ. The Christ calls people to carefully think about their way of life. That is why the parallel clause says, “ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent”. The people are to no longer “love vain words” (Psalm 4:2). Rather, they are to “be silent”. They are to **repent** of their evil ways. Paul quotes this Psalm in Ephesians 4:26.

⁶⁷ The *Selah* at the end of verse 4 indicates that the editor saw a break of some sort after this verse. The break may be because verse 5 is talking about how a person is to live once he has repented from evil.

5

Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.⁶⁸

6

There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?”⁶⁹
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!”⁷⁰

7

You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.⁷¹

8

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.⁷²

⁶⁸ Instead of dishonoring the King, people are to “Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD”. Trust in Yahweh is connected with recognizing the position of the Christ.

⁶⁹ Modern English translations translate this verse in different ways. The difference may be seen in the placement of the quotation marks. Quotation marks were not used in Ancient Hebrew or Ancient Greek, therefore, the quotation marks appearing in this verse are not part of the original text. The ESV (the version used here) ends the quotation at the end of verse 6. However, it seems more likely that the quote should end after, “Who will show us some good?” (this is the case in many modern English translations—see NIV 2011, NASB, NLT, HCSB, and NET). If this is the case, this verse contrasts **many people**, who are confused, with the **one King—the Christ**, who is not confused. The people are confused about the true source of goodness. They wonder where they might find “some good”.

⁷⁰ The Christ isn’t confused about the source of goodness. He knows that Yahweh alone is the source of goodness. He calls Yahweh to bless the people. His words echo the blessing of Aaron recorded in Numbers 6:22-27. Aaron was the high priest. Thus, in these verses, the Christ is filling a high priestly role.

⁷¹ The Christ acknowledges that Yahweh’s blessing is more satisfying than much grain and wine.

⁷² See the notes on Psalm 3:5.

Psalms 5 ...

... records the prayers of one person who is suffering.

Based on Psalms 2-4, the reader of the Psalms should understand that this one person with many enemies is the Anointed King (the Christ).

... records the prayers of the Christ regarding the wicked and the righteous.

... provides the Christian with great confidence because the prayers of the Christ are heard by God and are answered by him.

... provides Christians with a model to follow as they pray.

... provides the reader with a more complete picture of the wicked and of the righteous.

... is a call for the wicked to repent and for the righteous to persevere.

... is the third in a series of Psalms demonstrating that the Christ meditates on the law of Yahweh in the day and in the night. Psalm 3 is a “day” Psalm (see verse 5). Thus, the Christ describes his actions when he rises in the morning. Psalm 4 is a “night” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ lying down and going to sleep (4:8). Psalm 5 is a “day” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ praying in the morning (5:3). Psalm 6 is a “night” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ flooding his bed with tears (6:6). By putting these Psalms together, the editor seems to be emphasizing that the Christ truly does meditate on the law of Yahweh “**day and night**” (Psalm 1:2). This meditation on the law of Yahweh happens in the midst of great suffering. Those who are in Christ should, like the Christ, be constantly meditating on the law of Yahweh, even during times of great suffering.

... is quoted in the New Testament in Romans 3:13.

Psalm 5

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES.⁷³ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1

Give ear to my words, O LORD;
consider my groaning.⁷⁴

2

Give attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,⁷⁵
for to you do I pray.⁷⁶

⁷³ This is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

⁷⁴ This is the third straight “Psalm of David” that speaks of the suffering of one man at the hands of many enemies. This is a major theme in the Psalms of David (See, particularly, books 1 and 2 of the Psalms). Other themes are emphasized in other “groups” of Psalms as well. For instance, Psalms 146–150 all begin and end with the words “Praise the LORD!”. Praise to Yahweh for all he has done (because of the suffering and deliverance of the Anointed King) is the theme of these Psalms in book 5.

The repetition of themes in the Psalms should be seen as intentional. The Holy Spirit moved the writers of the Psalms to emphasize certain themes in their poems. Beyond this, it appears that the Holy Spirit moved the editor to place the Psalms in the order that they are placed. He did this so that truths presented in this book would deeply penetrate the hearts of God’s people. Based on the way the Psalms are written and organized, it is clear that God’s people need to be reminded of certain truths over and over again. The wise preacher or teacher will emphasize these same themes.

These first few Psalms demonstrate the importance of the Christ’s suffering and deliverance. However, the suffering and deliverance of the Christ is not the only theme that is evident in these first few Psalms. Prayer is also a theme. Psalm 5 is a prayer made by one man who is suffering. In the first clause in verse 1, this man asks Yahweh to “Give ear to my words”. The parallel clause (“consider my groaning”), greatly strengthens the first clause. The psalmist wants Yahweh to do more than just “hear” his words. He wants him to carefully “consider” (i.e., meditate upon) his **groans**. Based on Psalms 1–4, the reader may assume that the person who is “groaning” is the Anointed King—the Christ. Also, the reader may assume that the groans have been caused by the enemies of the Christ. The fact that the “groaning” of the Christ is caused by enemies is confirmed in verse 8.

⁷⁵ The Christ has a right relationship with God. He recognizes that, even though he is the Anointed King, there is another King over him—Yahweh. This, of course, was true of Jesus. He prayed to God the Father and said that he only did what the Father told him to do (see John 5:30 and 14:31). The authority he had was given to him by God (see Matthew 28:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

⁷⁶ The Christ’s commitment to prayer provides an example for all of God’s people. Prayer demonstrates great trust in God. God’s people must pray. See Luke 11:1–13 and 18:1–8.

3

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.⁷⁷

4

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The King prays to Yahweh every morning. He knows that Yahweh hears his prayers. It is significant to note that the gospels record Jesus praying in the morning (see Mark 1:35). The reader can assume that this was his regular practice (see Luke 11:1-13). Again, these early Psalms present the Christ meditating on the law of Yahweh **day and night**.

In the second clause of verse 3, the Christ says, “in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch”. This is not describing the Christ making a literal sacrifice (the word “sacrifice” is not used in the Hebrew or in the Greek). Rather, the King is poetically describing his prayers as if they were a sacrifice. In the same way that a priest would **arrange** a sacrifice, **present** the sacrifice to God, and **watch** the smoke of the incense offering ascend to heaven, the Anointed King **arranges** his prayers, **presents** them to Yahweh, and **watches** his prayers ascend to heaven. He knows that God is listening. He **waits** with expectation, knowing that God will answer his prayers.

God’s people are to imitate the Christ. Like our King, we must be “offering” our prayers to God every day. Like our King, we must expect him to hear and to answer our prayers. This demands **watching** and **waiting**. It is significant to note that the prayers of the saints are compared to incense in Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4.

Many Old Testament passages refer to Yahweh “smelling” the “pleasing aroma” of an offering and being **pleased** (see, for instance, Genesis 8:21, Exodus 29:18, 25, 41, and Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17). God was pleased when people of faith made sacrifices because the offering demonstrated faith in him and worship of him. Likewise, the Christian should know that prayer pleases God.

⁷⁸ This verse is another example of the Psalms teaching theology (truths about God and his ways). The Christ declares that Yahweh is not a God who “delights in wickedness”. The parallel clause in this line of poetry is even stronger—evil may not even “dwell” with God. For God to be good, he must not tolerate evil. If God were to tolerate evil, he would not be good and he would not be worthy of worship.

Verses 4-5 outline a tremendous problem for humans. God is good, but all people have sinned. **How can guilty people dwell with a righteous God? How can the Holy One who will not tolerate evil tolerate any human beings?** Within this Psalm, a partial answer to this question is found in verse 7. Only because of **God’s steadfast love for the Christ** can guilty people dwell with a righteous God. Verse 7, of course, doesn’t explain how God’s steadfast love solves the problem of a sinful people standing before a holy God. Readers need to remember that **the gospel is progressively revealed** in the Old Testament. No single passage in the Old Testament completely outlines the way that God planned to save his people from their sins. Only in the New Testament do we find all of the details of God’s plan fully revealed (see Ephesians 3:1-13 and 1 Peter 1:10-12).

5

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;⁷⁹
you hate all evildoers.⁸⁰

6

You destroy those who speak lies,⁸¹
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.⁸²

7

But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,⁸³
will enter your house.

⁷⁹ Verses 4-6 are referring to God's hatred of sin and to the judgment of the wicked (see Psalm 1:5). These verses are a gracious gift from God. They are a gracious gift to those who are not Christians, because they are meant to bring them to repentance. They are a gracious gift to Christians, because they are a warning to them that they must not, after they have turned to the Lord, continue to walk in sin.

⁸⁰ This does not mean that God will not forgive those who do evil. It does mean that those who refuse to repent of their wicked ways will be judged by God.

⁸¹ The Hebrew and Greek are singular. Therefore, this verse may not be referring to lies in general. Rather, based on earlier Psalms, it may be referring to **the lie** that people can throw off the rule of the Christ. See the note on Psalm 4:2.

⁸² The destruction of the wicked is emphasized throughout the Psalms. Again, to be worthy of worship, God must not tolerate wickedness. For him to permanently tolerate wickedness would be for him to proclaim that wickedness is, somehow, good. Such a god would not be worthy of worship.

⁸³ The answer to how a sinful person can relate to a holy God is found in verse 7. People can relate to a holy God because of God's **steadfast love for the Christ**. The fact that God would eternally be demonstrating his steadfast love to the Christ was promised in 2 Samuel 7:15. In that verse, God promises that his "steadfast love will not depart" from his "Son" (regarding the "Son" see the notes on Psalm 2). God the Father is bound, by his own word, to show his steadfast love to the Son **for all time**. But God's great steadfast love isn't just for the Son. It is also for the people who put their trust in the Son (see John 3:16-18). God showers his steadfast love on all those who are "in Christ". God's people can rest securely, knowing that God's steadfast love has been showered upon the Christ in great abundance and that his steadfast love for the Christ—and the people of the Christ—will never be removed! See, again, 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

This is the first appearance of the word translated **steadfast love** in the Psalms. The psalmist, speaking for all of God's people, repeatedly gives thanks for God's steadfast love, declares that his life depends on God's steadfast love, proclaims his trust in God's steadfast love, and sings of the joy and satisfaction he finds in his steadfast love. Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ have experienced God's steadfast love and will increase in their knowledge of that love as they grow in their knowledge of him. The best way to understand this word is to see how the word is used throughout the Psalms. See Psalm 6:4, 13:5, 25:6, 26:3, 31:7, 16, 33:22, 36:5, 7, 10, 40:10-11, 44:26, 48:9, 51:1, 57:10, 59:16, 63:3, 69:13, 16, 85:7, 86:13, 88:11, 90:14, 92:2, 94:18, 108:4, 109:21, 26, 115:1, 119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159, 138:2, 8, and 143:8, 12.

I will bow down toward your holy temple⁸⁴
in the fear of you.

8

Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.⁸⁵

9

For there is no truth in their mouth;
their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.⁸⁶

10

Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;

⁸⁴ This is the first reference to the temple in the Psalms. This, too, will become a major theme in the book of Psalms. The temple is the place where those who **fear God** (5:7) go to worship him and find forgiveness and healing and joy. In later Psalms, the psalmists write with great anguish because the temple has been destroyed. God's people have always longed to be in his presence.

While the psalmists were in mourning because the temple had been destroyed, readers of the New Testament know that the true and final temple has been raised up (see John 2:18-22). Jesus Christ is now the "temple" where God is worshiped. People come to him in order to find forgiveness and to worship God. Those who are "in Christ" become part of the true temple that God is building (see Ephesians 2:11-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-8).

Even though the temple has been "rebuilt" in Christ, the Psalms mourning its destruction are very valuable to the Christian. They demonstrate the preciousness of the temple. They should cause Christians to give thanks that God has answered the prayers of the psalmists and that the temple has been rebuilt in Christ. These Psalms should cause Christians to worship!

⁸⁵ The Christ asks Yahweh for help because of his many enemies. The people of the Christ can take great confidence that Yahweh will answer the prayers of his "Son"!

⁸⁶ This is a description of the enemies of the King. In Romans 3:9-18, the Apostle Paul quotes this verse (and several other Old Testament verses) to prove that **all people**, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are "under sin" (Romans 3:9). This verse, therefore, is one of the verses Paul uses to prove that "None is righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10) and that "no one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12). Paul quotes this verse to demonstrate that all people have done evil and deserve God's judgment. No one, based on Paul's words, can be saved because of his or her own righteousness.

In the same passage in Romans 3, however, Paul outlines a way **for wicked people to receive forgiveness and to be counted as righteous**. He says that God justifies (declares righteous) those who come to him in faith "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (see Romans 3:24). In other words, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, guilty people can have their sins forgiven and be declared righteousness!

because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.⁸⁷

11

But let all who take refuge⁸⁸ in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.⁸⁹

12

For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover him with favor as with a shield.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ The Christ, like Yahweh himself, cannot ignore wickedness. If he would do this, he would be wicked himself. The King is righteous. Therefore, he asks God to punish those who are guilty. Based on earlier Psalms, to rebel against God is to rebel against his law (see Psalm 1) and against his Christ (see Psalm 2).

Passages that speak of the Christ calling for God to judge the wicked may cause some to think that the Christ is cruel and vindictive. The Christ is not cruel. He loves Yahweh and he loves people. It would be great wickedness for him to ignore evil. The reader should remember earlier Psalms where the Christ calls rebels to turn from their sin (see Psalm 4:2-5). The Christ is merciful. But this does not mean that he will pass over the sins of people forever.

⁸⁸ In Psalm 2:12, blessings are promised to “all who **take refuge** in [the Christ]”. Psalm 5 speaks of those “who **take refuge** in [Yahweh]”. The people of God take refuge in Yahweh by placing their faith in Yahweh’s Anointed King—Christ Jesus.

⁸⁹ In verse 11, the Christ’s prayers turn from the wicked to the righteous. These people were not born righteous. Both the Old Testament and New Testament are clear that people are born sinners (see, for instance, Genesis 6:5, 8:21, and Romans 3:9-18). This Psalm does not explicitly say how these people became righteous. Readers of the New Testament know that righteousness comes from faith in God because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (see Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-26, and 2 Corinthians 5:21). This, however, is not clear in this Psalm. The Psalms, and every other Old Testament book, progressively reveal the gospel message.

What is clear in this Psalm is that the Christ wants Yahweh to pour his blessing on those who have taken **refuge** in God. He prays that they may be able to “ever sing for joy”. He prays that those who **love** the name of Yahweh may be able to exult in him. The reason the Christ wants Yahweh to protect the righteous and give favor to them is so that they might praise him. This is a demonstration of the Christ’s love of Yahweh and Yahweh’s people. His love of Yahweh causes him to pray that he will be worshiped. His love of people causes him to pray that they might be able to worship. There is no greater good in all the universe than to worship the living God! Only the righteous (again, those who have been made righteous because of the steadfast love of Yahweh revealed in the gospel event) may do this.

⁹⁰ In the same way that Yahweh helps the Christ, Yahweh helps the righteous. This declaration by the Christ should bring great encouragement to the Christian.

Psalm 6 ...

... records the suffering and deliverance of the Christ.

... describes the discipline of Yahweh that is directed toward the Christ.

... includes words of warning and judgment spoken by the Christ against his enemies.

... is the fourth in a series of Psalms demonstrating that the Christ meditates on the law of Yahweh in the day and in the night. Psalm 3 is a “day” Psalm (see verse 5). Thus, the Christ describes his actions when he arises in the morning. Psalm 4 is a “night” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ lying down and going to sleep (4:8). Psalm 5 is a “day” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ praying in the morning (5:3). Psalm 6 is a “night” Psalm. The Psalm describes the Christ flooding his bed with tears (6:6). By putting these Psalms together, the editor seems to be emphasizing that the Christ truly does meditate on the law of Yahweh “**day and night**” (Psalm 1:2). This meditation on the law of Yahweh happens in the midst of great suffering. Those who are in Christ should imitate the constant meditation of the Christ upon the law of Yahweh.

... is closely connected to 2 Samuel 7:14-15.

... is quoted in the New Testament in John 12:27, Matthew 7:23, and Luke 13:27. These verses and the verses surrounding them should be carefully examined in connection with this Psalm.

Psalm 6

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS;
ACCORDING TO THE SHEMINITH.⁹¹ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,

⁹¹ This is a musical instruction. The word SHEMINITH seems to be somehow related to the number eight. This may mean that this Psalm was originally to be played upon an instrument with eight strings (see also Psalm 12). 1 Chronicles 15 tells the story of the Ark of the Covenant being brought to Jerusalem. In 1 Chronicles 15:21, the author uses this same word, writing that the musicians, “were to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith”. Again, the final meaning of this musical instruction is not important. The instruction is important because it is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

nor discipline me in your wrath.⁹²

2

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.⁹³

⁹² Once again, a Psalm records the prayer of one man (the Anointed King—the Christ) with many enemies (see verses 6–10). The prayer of the Christ, however, isn’t to be delivered from his enemies. His prayer is in regard to the “rebuke” and “discipline” from Yahweh that he is currently experiencing. The Christ knows that this discipline is connected to Yahweh’s **anger**.

The Hebrew word translated **anger** is the word for “nose”. The idea seems to be of nostrils being dilated in great anger (like a horse snorting in fury). In Psalm 2:5, the word is used to describe the anger of Yahweh against those who would throw off his rule and the rule of the Christ. In other passages in the Old Testament, **it is used to describe Yahweh’s dreadful actions toward those who sin against him** (see 2 Kings 13:3). Yahweh’s anger is “fierce” (see Jeremiah 25:37) and results in destruction (see 2 Samuel 6:7 and Jeremiah 44:6). In this Psalm, however, the anger of Yahweh isn’t directed against those who hate Yahweh. Rather, it is directed toward Yahweh’s Anointed King! The Christ is, for some reason, being treated like an enemy of Yahweh!

The reason behind Yahweh’s anger toward the Christ is not stated in this verse. The reader knows that sin, somehow, must be connected to the “rebuke” and the “discipline” that the Christ is experiencing. But the Christ does not say that he has sinned. In fact, even while he is experiencing Yahweh’s discipline, the Christ still honors and praises him (see verses 4–5).

The reader should not ignore the sudden change in the relationship between the Christ and Yahweh. The Christ has, up to this point in the Psalms, been presented as righteous (see Psalms 1–5). He meditates on the law of the LORD day and night. He avoids evil. He instructs those who sin. He calls sinners to repentance. He prays to Yahweh. He rejoices in Yahweh. He trusts in Yahweh. And Yahweh loves the Christ and pours his favor out on him. Yet, in Psalm 6, the Christ is suddenly being disciplined by Yahweh. What has caused his anger to be turned toward the righteous King?

The answer to this question is not found in this Psalm. It is, however, answered in the New Testament (and in other Old Testament passages). **The story of the righteous King (Psalms 1–5) who is disciplined by God because of sin (Psalm 6, Psalm 118:17–18) is the story of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.** Jesus is proclaimed, from the first verse of the New Testament, to be the Christ—the King of God’s people (see Matthew 1:1). Jesus was without sin. At his baptism, God the Father said that he was well pleased with Jesus (see Mark 1:11). Jesus was tempted and never sinned (see Matthew 4:1–11). Yet, **even though he never sinned, Jesus suffered because of sin.** He took the sins of God’s people upon himself. **God poured his wrath out on Christ because of those sins** (see Isaiah 53:6–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ cried out for deliverance from God’s wrath (see Matthew 27:46–49). His prayers were answered. He was raised from the dead.

The connection between this Psalm and Jesus is made even clearer because of Jesus’ words recorded in **John 12:27**. In this passage, Jesus quotes Psalm 6:3. He applies the words of this Psalm to himself! The story of this Psalm, then, is the story of the Christ. **It is the story of a righteous King bearing God’s wrath because of sin and being delivered from it.** Because of his deliverance, the enemies of the King are defeated.

⁹³ The King seems to be close to death. He asks Yahweh to be gracious and to heal him.

3

My soul also is greatly troubled.⁹⁴
But you, O LORD—how long?⁹⁵

4

Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.⁹⁶

5

For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?⁹⁷

6

I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;

⁹⁴ Jesus quoted the words in Psalm 6:3 when he spoke to the crowds about his upcoming crucifixion: “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. Father, glorify your name” (see John 12:27–28). Those who heard Jesus’ words (at least some of them) **would have** recognized that he was quoting Psalm 6. They **should have** thought hard about this Psalm and recognized that Jesus was connecting himself with the King in this Psalm. Those who read this Psalm today should recognize that Jesus is the King being referred to in this Psalm. This should lead to worship and to great glory to God (see John 12:28).

⁹⁵ The King wonders how long his suffering must go on. Jesus, of course, cried out something similar on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (See Matthew 27:46). He wondered how long he must endure God’s wrath that was being poured out upon him. Jesus suffered the exact amount of time necessary to satisfy the wrath of God—for all the people of God for all time! He is, as John the Baptist said, “the Lamb of God, **who takes away the sin of the world**” (John 1:29).

⁹⁶ The King asks Yahweh to save him because of his **steadfast love**. Yahweh’s steadfast love for his “Son” (see Psalm 2:7) causes him to answer the King’s prayers (see 2 Samuel 7:15). Beyond this, his steadfast love for his people causes him to answer the King’s prayers (see John 3:16–18 and Romans 5:8). Regarding the steadfast love of Yahweh see the note on 5:7.

⁹⁷ This is the first reference to Sheol in the Psalms. Sheol is not hell. It is a poetic word for the place of the dead. The King’s concern is that Yahweh will not be praised if he is dead. It is a simple thought. God is praised by the living, not the dead. The King’s words apply to the resurrection of the Christ. **If the Christ was not delivered from death, no one would be able to give God praise.** The lives of God’s people depend on the Christ being raised from the dead. This is exactly what happened. Jesus has been raised from the dead. He is alive. And because he is alive, God is receiving praise—from Christ **and** from all those who are “in him”. To be unable to praise God is presented as the worst thing that can happen to a person. Regarding Sheol, see Psalm 9:17, 16:10, 18:5, 30:3, 31:17, 49:14, 55:15, 86:13, 88:3, 89:48, 116:3, 139:8, and 141:7.

I drench my couch with my weeping.⁹⁸

7

My eye wastes away because of grief;
it grows weak because of all my foes.⁹⁹

8

Depart from me, all you workers of evil,¹⁰⁰
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.¹⁰¹

9

The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD accepts my prayer.¹⁰²

10

All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled;
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Compare the agony of the Christ as he weeps on his bed to the peaceful sleep he describes in Psalm 3:5 and 4:8. Again, this is a sign that some great change has happened in the life of the King. **It is significant to note that the King is now doing the thing he commanded sinners to do in Psalm 4:4.** The King floods his bed with tears, presumably, because the weight of Yahweh's anger is too much for him to bear. Regarding the suffering of Christ because of the weight of sin, the Christian should remember Christ's prayers in the garden (see Mark 14:32-42 and Hebrews 5:7-10).

This passage, of course, isn't just about the Christ. All people should feel this way when they sin against God. Regarding sin in the life of the Christian, see 1 John 1:9.

⁹⁹ Only at this point in the Psalm does the King speak of his enemies.

¹⁰⁰ Jesus quotes these words when he declares the words he will speak to the wicked at the final judgment (see Matthew 7:23 and Luke 13:27). Jesus' quotations from Psalm 6 are additional indications that Christ saw himself as the one who fulfills this Psalm.

¹⁰¹ The Christ declares that Yahweh has answered his prayers. The anger and wrath of Yahweh will turn away from the Christ.

¹⁰² The Christ declares that God has answered his prayers (see verse 2). The people who love and honor the Christ can take great joy, knowing that their King is no longer being disciplined by God. Rather, his prayers have been accepted by God.

¹⁰³ The "moment" of the Christ's deliverance is the "moment" of the defeat of his enemies. In regard to the enemies of Christ and their defeat, see Ephesians 1:20-23 and Colossians 2:15. **This verse is a warning to all those who oppose the Christ.** This warning is God's grace to his enemies. It is intended to cause them to repent before they are judged. It is also grace to the Christian. This verse is intended to bring great encouragement to those who love and honor the Christ. This verse is proof that the suffering of the Christian will not last forever. Because they follow the Anointed King, their enemies truly are his enemies. And every enemy will be defeated by the Christ!

This Psalm should be compared with 2 Samuel 7:12-16. They are very similar. Both passages describe a King who is disciplined by Yahweh because of sin. Both passages present Yahweh's steadfast love as the means by which the King is delivered. And both passages end with the enemies of the King having been defeated. That King is Jesus Christ!

Psalm 7 ...

- ... records the suffering of the Christ.**
- ... records the prayers of the Christ.**
- ... emphasizes the innocence of the Christ.**
- ... focuses on the judgment of Yahweh.**
- ... includes a vow from the Christ that he will praise Yahweh.**
- ... includes the first use of the name “Most High” in the Psalms.**
- ... is not directly quoted in the New Testament.**

Psalm 7

A SHIGGAION OF DAVID,¹⁰⁴ WHICH HE SANG TO THE LORD
CONCERNING THE WORDS OF CUSH, A BENJAMINITE.¹⁰⁵

1

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,¹⁰⁶

2

lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.¹⁰⁷

3

O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,

¹⁰⁴ The meaning of this musical term is not certain. The term is also used in Habukkuk 3:1. This is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

¹⁰⁵ The identity of Cush the Benjaminite is unknown. Perhaps this event was recorded in one of the scrolls that are referred to in 1 Chronicles 29:29-30 (these scrolls have not been found). It may be significant that King Saul was also from the tribe of Benjamin. Some Benjaminites may have thought that David was not the rightful king and that he “stole” the kingdom from Saul. This may have led to persecution from the Benjaminites (see 2 Samuel 20:1). The exact identity of Cush the Benjaminite is not important. David’s experiences with this “enemy” (and many others) allowed him to write powerful poetry that speaks of the sufferings of the Christ at the hands of his enemies.

It is significant to note that, in the New Testament, another Benjaminite—Saul of Tarsus—was actively persecuting the Christ. Consider Jesus’ words to Saul: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4). It is important to note that Paul wasn’t persecuting Jesus himself. He was actually persecuting **the church** after Jesus’ ascension to heaven. However, to persecute the church is to persecute Christ, for the church is Christ’s body. That is why Jesus said, “why are you persecuting **me**?”. Saul (later known as Paul the Apostle) was “conquered” by the love and mercy of Christ. He repented of his sin, loved Christ, suffered for Christ, worked for Christ, and ultimately died for Christ.

¹⁰⁶ Once again, we find a Psalm focusing on one person with many enemies. Based on earlier Psalms, the reader should see this person as the Anointed King, the Christ. The Christ declares that Yahweh is his God. His prayers to Yahweh for help are based on the relationship he has with Yahweh.

¹⁰⁷ If Yahweh does not deliver the Christ, there will be no deliverance for the Christ from anywhere. Yahweh is his only hope. If the Christ is destroyed, it will impact more than just the Christ. The people under his care will also be destroyed, for they will be like “sheep without a shepherd” (see 1 Kings 22:17). Therefore, the Christ’s prayers for deliverance are also prayers on behalf of his people. If he is delivered, they will be delivered. If he is destroyed, they will be destroyed. It is significant that Jesus Christ saw the people as sheep without a shepherd. He is the good shepherd (see Mark 6:34 and John 10).

The enemies of the Christ are also compared to wild animals in Psalm 22.

4

if I have repaid my friend with evil
or plundered my enemy without cause,¹⁰⁸

5

let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,
and let him trample my life to the ground
and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*

6

Arise, O LORD, in your anger;¹⁰⁹
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.¹¹⁰

7

Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you;
over it return on high.

8

The LORD judges the peoples;¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ In verses 3-5, the King is actually taking a vow. He is declaring, using a form of an oath, that he can be examined by Yahweh because he has done no evil. The innocence of the Christ is a major theme in the Psalms. The Christ declares his innocence over and over again. Clearly, it is important for the people who are following the Christ to know that he is innocent of all wrong-doing. They need to know that the Christ can withstand the righteous judgment of Yahweh. The Christ can be followed and obeyed without fear because his followers know that Yahweh will find no hidden sin within him. The words that were spoken at Jesus' baptism should give the Christian great confidence in their King's standing before Yahweh: "You are my beloved Son; **with you I am well pleased**" (Mark 1:11).

¹⁰⁹ In Psalm 6, the anger of Yahweh was directed against the Christ. Here, the Christ calls Yahweh to direct his anger toward the enemies of the Christ. Regarding the anger of Yahweh, see the note on 6:1.

¹¹⁰ This Psalm is about the judgment of Yahweh. The judgment of Yahweh is a major theme in the Psalms (see Psalm 1:5). In this verse, we see that Yahweh's judgment is connected to the Christ: "awake **for me**; you have appointed a judgment". The Christ is asking Yahweh to rise up in anger against his enemies and to judge them. The statement, "you have **appointed** a judgment" means that this event will surely take place. The fact that a judgment has been appointed should cause all people to repent and to come to the Christ so that they might receive mercy from Yahweh. As the New Testament makes clear, all judgment has been given by God the Father to the Christ. See Matthew 25:31-46, Acts 17:30-31, and Revelation 20:11-15.

¹¹¹ Both verses 7 and 8 declare that Yahweh judges "**the peoples**". No person, no matter where he or she may be from, will escape his judgment. He "tests the minds and hearts" (see verse 9) of all people from every nation. The judgment of God will happen at the end of the age. However, as these verses make clear, judgment is also happening now.

judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.¹¹²

9

Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
and may you establish the righteous—¹¹³
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God!

10

My shield is with God,
who saves the upright in heart.¹¹⁴

11

God is a righteous judge,
and a God who feels indignation every day.¹¹⁵

12

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;
he has bent and readied his bow;

13

he has prepared for him his deadly weapons,

¹¹² Only one person in all of human history could ask to be judged according to his own righteousness. Only Jesus is without sin (see Psalm 14 and Romans 3:9-18). The Christ will pass Yahweh's judgment because he is righteous. The good news of the gospel is that those who are "in Christ" are counted as righteous because their righteous King, Jesus Christ, has taken their sins upon himself and paid the penalty for their sin. This is why Isaiah 53:11 says, "**the righteous one, my servant**" will "**make many to be accounted righteous**". The "many" are able to be counted righteous because, "**he shall bear their iniquities**". See also Isaiah 53:4-6 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

¹¹³ The Christ loves righteousness and hates wickedness (see Psalm 45:6-7 and Hebrews 1:8-9). This verse should give great confidence to the righteous. Even though they may be suffering now, the evil of the wicked will come to an end and the righteous will be established. This verse should bring great fear to the wicked. Their judgment is surely coming.

¹¹⁴ "Shield" is a **concrete** way of describing the protection God gives to the righteous.

¹¹⁵ God hates evil. If he were to ignore evil, he would not be a righteous judge. People need to know that God never ignores sin. He "**feels indignation every day**". There is never a day when it is safe to walk in sin.

making his arrows fiery shafts.¹¹⁶

14

Behold, the wicked man conceives evil
and is pregnant with mischief
and gives birth to lies.

15

He makes a pit, digging it out,
and falls into the hole that he has made.

16

His mischief returns upon his own head,
and on his own skull his violence descends.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ These verses are warnings. The Christ talks of God preparing his weapons so that he might use them against the wicked. The **concrete** language of poetry is very powerful here. The reader imagines God sharpening his sword. We see God stringing his bow and slowly drawing it back. God's "weapons" will be used against the wicked. However, this verse has great hope in it. The verse begins with the word "If": "If a man does not repent". There is hope for those who repent! This verse is a call for the wicked to repent. Once again, we see that God is gracious. He is "slow to anger" (see Exodus 34:6-7). These warnings in the Psalms are grace from God. They are meant to cause the wicked to examine their ways, to repent of their sin, and to turn to God in faith.

¹¹⁷ These verses give hope to the righteous. They will not always suffer at the hands of the wicked. These verses serve as a warning to the wicked. They must repent before they fall into the hole they have made and violence descends on their skulls.

17

I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness,
and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High. ¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The Psalm concludes with the Christ promising to praise Yahweh. This vow to praise is common in the Psalms (see, for instance, Psalm 22:25). The Christ frequently takes a vow that he will, based on his deliverance, praise Yahweh. But the Christ does more than just promise that he will praise Yahweh. In verse 17 he describes how he will praise him. This a great help to the Christian! The Christ is demonstrating how God's people are to praise God! The Christ says that he will give "the thanks due to his righteousness". This means that **the righteousness of Yahweh which he demonstrates in judgment** demands thanksgiving. It is one of the many attributes of God that is to be celebrated by his people.

The Christ promises to "sing praise to the name of the LORD, the **Most High**". This is the first time the name **Most High** is used in the Psalms. It means that Yahweh is above everything else. He is above all other "gods", above all humans, above all nations, and above all situations. The Christ demonstrates his faith in Yahweh by calling him the Most High even though the Christ is currently suffering persecution and is waiting for the righteous judgment of Yahweh to take place.

God's people need to remember that Yahweh is the Most High. This name is important to remember when enemies (like "Cush the Benjaminite"—see the superscription of Psalm 7) are acting like they are the most high.

The first use of **Most High** in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 14: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God **Most High**.) And he blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God **Most High**, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God **Most High**, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!'" (Genesis 14:18-20).

As this first use of the name makes clear, to be the **Most High** means that Yahweh, and no one else, **possesses heaven and earth**. Because he is the Most High, Yahweh cannot be conquered. Rather, he is the one who conquers the enemies of his people. It is significant that this name is first used by the priest Melchizedek, for Jesus is referred to as a "priest in the order of Melchizedek" (see Hebrews 5:6-7:28 and Psalm 110:4). This name is also used of Yahweh in Psalm 9:2, 18:13, 21:7, 46:4, 47:2, 50:14, 57:2, 73:11, 77:10, 78:17, 78:35, 78:56, 82:6, 83:18, 87:5, 91:1, 91:9, 92:1, 97:9, and 107:11.

Psalm 8 ...

... is about the greatness of Yahweh's name (or reputation) in all the earth.

... describes the role mankind has been given so that Yahweh's name might be seen as great in all the earth.

... uses language that is intended to remind the reader of Genesis 1.

... presents an ideal picture of man. In other words, the Psalm doesn't describe the sinfulness of man (unlike Psalm 14). It describes man as if he is perfectly ruling over God's creation and is perfectly fulfilling the role given to him in Genesis 1:26-27.

... uses the title "son of man" in its description of the one fulfilling God's purposes in the earth. It is significant to note that "Son of Man" was the title Jesus most often used in reference to himself.

... is quoted in Matthew 21:16, 1 Corinthians 15:27, Ephesians 1:22, and Hebrews 2:6-8. These passages should be carefully studied in connection with this Psalm.

Psalm 8

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE GITTITH.¹¹⁹ A
PSALM OF DAVID.

1

O LORD, our¹²⁰ Lord,
how majestic is your name¹²¹ in all the earth!¹²²
You have set your glory above the heavens.

2

Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength¹²³ because of your foes,

¹¹⁹ This is a musical instruction. Scholars are not certain about the meaning of this term. This is a reminder that this Psalm is to be used in public worship.

¹²⁰ The psalmist (the Christ) isn't alone. His use of the word "our" indicates that he is praising Yahweh along with a multitude of people. Those reading this Psalm should carefully consider whether they are merely readers of this Psalm or whether they are part of this multitude praising Yahweh.

¹²¹ The Christ is praising the great **name** of Yahweh. **This focus on the majestic name of Yahweh connects Psalm 8 with Psalm 7.** The last verse of Psalm 7 reads, "I will sing praise to **the name** of the LORD, the Most High" (7:17). The very next verse in the Psalter (8:1) is praise of Yahweh's great name: "how majestic is **your name** in all the earth" (see also 8:9). This may be why these two Psalms have been placed next to each other. The name of Yahweh is another way of describing his **reputation**. This Psalm celebrates Yahweh's majestic reputation in all the earth.

¹²² Psalm 8 is a literary **envelope**. **Envelope** is a term used to describe a literary passage that begins and ends with the same words (this is also called an **inclusio**). Psalm 8 begins and ends with the same phrase: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!". By using the same phrase at the beginning and the end of the Psalm, the psalmist is signaling that everything found between the two boundaries set by this literary envelope is an explanation of how Yahweh's majestic name has been made known in all the earth.

¹²³ Jesus quotes the first portion of verse 2 in Matthew 21:16. His quotation demands close study. In Matthew 21, Jesus is receiving praise from children because they are seeing "the wonderful things that he did" (see Matthew 21:15). The chief priests and scribes are angry that Jesus is receiving praise. Jesus responds to them by quoting Psalm 8:2. Jesus takes a Psalm about praise to Yahweh and applies it to himself! Beyond this, Jesus quotes a Psalm about the enemies of Yahweh ("the enemy and the avenger") and quotes it to his enemies (the chief priests and scribes).

Jesus' quotation is from the Septuagint. This translation reads, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise". Thus, while the Hebrew says that Yahweh has "established strength", the Greek says that he has "prepared praise". The Greek translation quoted by Jesus helps the reader understand the poetic meaning of "strength". The strength that is coming out of the mouths of "babies and infants" is praise. Yahweh's enemies are not defeated by earthly weapons of warfare or by those who are physically strong. Rather, Yahweh's enemies are defeated by words of praise. This is the strength with which the people of God are to fight.

to still the enemy and the avenger.¹²⁴

3

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Verse 2 may appear to be out of place. What do “babies and infants” have to do with Yahweh’s reputation on the earth? The psalmist seems to be saying that Yahweh’s chosen way of showing his greatness on the earth is by using **words** from “the mouth of babies and infants”! The description of people as “babies and infants” is an example of the concrete language used in the Psalms. This Psalm isn’t about “babies and infants”. It is describing the full grown human who, by his words and deeds, displays Yahweh’s greatness. The words “babies and infants” emphasize the weakness of man. The psalmist seems to be saying that Yahweh has ordained that mankind, even though it is very weak and seemingly insignificant, will be the means by which Yahweh’s foes are silenced and the means by which his name will be proclaimed as majestic in all the earth.

Of course, anyone reading the story of the Bible knows that the first man did not use his words this way when Satan (the enemy of God) attempted to deceive him. Instead, Adam agreed with Satan’s words and doubted Yahweh’s good words (see Genesis 3:1-6). It is significant to note that Jesus, who is called **the last Adam** in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, did use his words to silence Satan (see Matthew 4:1-11). In Christ, God’s purposes for mankind are fulfilled.

¹²⁵ This Psalm has many connections with the creation account in Genesis 1. Clearly, the psalmist wants his readers to think of Genesis 1 when they read this Psalm. This Psalm demonstrates that the original purposes for man outlined in Genesis 1 were not thwarted by sin or by Satan.

4

what is man that you are mindful of him,¹²⁶

¹²⁶ In the same way that the creation account in Genesis 1 starts with the heavens and moves to the earth, the psalmist's thoughts move from the heavens to the earth. After thinking about the greatness of the sun, moon, and stars, the psalmist is amazed that Yahweh notices and cares for people. In terms of glory, size, and strength, mankind seems unimportant. However, Yahweh has given him a position of the greatest importance. He is charged with proclaiming Yahweh's majesty in all the earth. These verses are a commentary on the meaning of Genesis 1:26-28. Mankind's purpose is to bring Yahweh's image into all the earth. The words and actions of people are Yahweh's chosen means to display his greatness.

and the son of man¹²⁷ that you care for him?

5

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ The title “**son of man**” is highly significant. It may appear to be merely a poetic echo of the word “man” (the parallel word used in the first clause of verse 4). In other words, at first glance, “son of man” appears to be nothing more than a different way of saying “man”. This is, indeed, the case with some of the uses of “son of man” in the Old Testament. Sometimes, authors appear to use this title with no additional meaning attached to it beyond “human”.

However, in Psalm 8, Psalm 80:17-19, and Daniel 7:13-14 the title means much more than merely “human”. These key Old Testament passages add a great deal of meaning to the title “son of man”. Like an empty ship that is loaded with cargo, the title “son of man” has been loaded with a great deal of freight. According to **Psalm 8**, the **son of man** is one who was made “a little lower than the heavenly beings”. Yet, in spite of this, Yahweh “crowned him with glory and honor”. Yahweh has “put all things under his feet”. In other words, the “son of man” has been made king over all things. Because of the language connected to ruling and reigning that is used in this Psalm, the title “son of man” should be connected with the title Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:25-27).

Psalm 80 records the psalmist Asaph’s prayers to the “God of hosts” to deliver his people. Asaph reminds God of the horrors that have come upon his people. He asks God to send help. He says, “But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself! Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name! Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!” (Psalm 80:17-19). Notice, Asaph ties the salvation of God’s people to the **son of man**. He declares that when God’s hand is on the son of man, then God’s people will be saved.

The prophet **Daniel** adds a great deal to the freight that has been loaded on to this title. Daniel, like Asaph, is horrified as he considers the troubles facing the people of God. As he thinks about these troubles, he sees a vision of a person approaching the throne of God: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14). According to Daniel, the “son of man” is given “dominion and glory and a kingdom” that all “peoples, nations, and languages should serve him”. This language should remind the reader of the things said about the Christ in Psalm 2. It is also echoed in Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”.

The importance of the title “Son of Man” is easy to see in the New Testament. This title is used more than 80 times in the gospels. It is Jesus’ favorite title for himself. It is significant to note that Jesus uses the title “Son of Man” with the word “the” in front of it. He does not refer to himself as “a” son of man. Rather, he refers to himself as “**THE** Son of Man. See, for instance, Mark 2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 8:38, 9:9, 9:12, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 13:26, 14:21, 14:41, and 14:62. All of these verses should be studied carefully.

¹²⁸ See Hebrews 2:5-9.

6

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,¹²⁹

7

all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

8

the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.¹³⁰

9

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!¹³¹

¹²⁹ Paul refers to this passage in 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 and Ephesians 1:22. According to Paul, this passage is referring to Jesus Christ. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15 should be carefully studied, because in verse 25 he refers to Psalm 110: "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1). In verse 27 he quotes Psalm 8. Thus, Paul connects the man being described in Psalm 110 with the "son of man" in Psalm 8. That man is Jesus! In Mark 14:62, Jesus also refers to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14.

¹³⁰ The order of the created things over which the "son of man" has dominion is presented in the reverse order of that seen in Genesis 1. It is almost as if the psalmist is, after thousands of years of sin and death in the world, retelling the creation story. He wants the reader to see that the "son of man" will fulfill the mandate that was given to mankind in Genesis 1. The "son of man" is the one who will bring Yahweh's image into all the earth.

¹³¹ The reader is, as with verse 1 of the Psalm, reminded of the theme of this Psalm. It is all about the majestic reputation of Yahweh on the earth. How has Yahweh's majestic name (reputation) filled the earth? It is because of the "son of man". He has fulfilled the mandate given to mankind in Genesis 1. He has, by his words and actions, filled the earth with testimony of Yahweh's greatness. Jesus is the fulfillment of this Psalm. This is clear from many New Testament passages (see verses above). He is the Son of Man. **But Jesus isn't alone.** All those who are "in him" also fulfill this Psalm. In the same way that the first Adam was the first in a long line of rebels opposed to God's will, so Jesus is the first in a long line of righteous people who display God's glory in the earth. Thus, the "son of man" is Jesus ... and all those who are in him. These people, and only these people, fulfill the mandate given to mankind in Genesis 1. This is why Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 7 refers to "the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" being "given to the **people** of the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:27). THE Son of Man is Jesus! However, because of his life, death, and resurrection, the term "son of man" is also a fitting description of all those who are in him!

Psalm 9 ...

... is connected in some way to Psalm 10.

... features a unique pattern in which the poetic stanzas follow a pattern based on the order of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The pattern begins in Psalm 9 and concludes in Psalm 10.

... is the first Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that seem to be focused on the word “forget” (see 9:12, 9:17, 9:18, 10:11, 10:12, and 13:1). The word is used in three ways in these Psalms. First, it is to bring comfort to the righteous: Yahweh “does not forget the cry of the afflicted” (see 9:12 and 9:18). Second, it is used to describe the nations that forget God and the punishment they will receive because of this great sin (see 9:17 and 10:11). Third, it is used by the Christ as he calls Yahweh to “forget not the afflicted” (see 10:12) and as he waits patiently for Yahweh to keep his promises to deliver him (see 13:1).

... is the first Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that seem to be focused on the word “see” (see 9:13, 10:11, 10:14, 11:4, and 14:2). The word is used in three ways in these Psalms. First, it is used by the Christ as he calls on Yahweh to “see” his affliction (see 9:13). Second, it is used to describe the wicked, demonstrating that they do not believe Yahweh can see their evil deeds (see 10:11). Third, it is used by the Christ as he proclaims the truth that Yahweh does see the righteous and the wicked (see 10:14, 11:4, and 14:2).

... is divided in two parts. The Psalm begins with the praises of the Christ (verses 1-12). The Psalm concludes with the Christ praying that he might be delivered and the nations might be judged so that he might praise Yahweh and rejoice in his salvation (verses 13-20).

... is not directly quoted in the New Testament. Christ does appear to make reference to Psalm 9:13-14 in Luke 10:15.

Psalm 9¹³²

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO MUTH-LABBEN.¹³³ A
PSALM OF DAVID.

1

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;

I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

2

I will be glad and exult in you;

¹³² Psalms 9 and 10 may have, at one time, been combined together. This is likely for at least three reasons. **First**, in the Hebrew, Psalms 9 and 10 follow a unique pattern in which each the poetic stanzas begin with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, starting with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet and continuing in order through the alphabet (a few letters are not used). Psalm 9 doesn't go through the entire Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 10 begins where Psalm 9 ends. These Psalms are the first Psalms in the Psalter to follow this alphabetic pattern. **Second**, unlike the other Psalms in book 1 (with the exception of Psalms 1 and 2, which are introductory Psalms, and Psalm 33 which seems to be connected with Psalm 32), there is no superscription in Psalm 10, suggesting that the editor of the Hebrew text is signaling to the reader that the superscription of Psalm 9 also applies to Psalm 10. **Third**, these Psalms are combined in the Septuagint, suggesting that the translator of the Septuagint was working from a Hebrew text in which these two Psalms were combined.

However, while these Psalms clearly belong together, there is a reason that they have been separated, at least in the Hebrew text from which the English translation was made (referred to as the MT). It is the joy of the reader and the obligation of the preacher to discover the individual treasures found in both of these Psalms.

¹³³ This is probably a musical term of some sort. It is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

I will sing praise to your name,¹³⁴ O Most High.¹³⁵

3

When my enemies turn back,¹³⁶
they stumble and perish before your presence.¹³⁷

4

For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne,¹³⁸ giving righteous judgment.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ The Christ vows to praise Yahweh. This is common in the Psalter. **This praise may be seen in verses 1-12.** The praise of the Christ is a demonstration of his **faith** in Yahweh, because, as verse 13 makes clear, he is, even as he makes these vows, being afflicted by enemies who hate him and are trying to kill him. These promises to praise Yahweh demonstrate that the Christ **believes** that he will be delivered from these enemies and that he will live to praise Yahweh. Verses 1 and 2 are reminders that the Christ, as the rightful leader of God's people, is the preeminent praiser of God. His actions should be imitated by all of the people of God (see verse 11). Even when suffering, God's people are to praise him.

¹³⁵ The promise by the Christ to "sing praise" to the "name" of the "Most High" is virtually identical to the promise by the Christ in Psalm 7:17. Between these two promises to sing praises to Yahweh's great name is Psalm 8, which begins and ends in the same way: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!". Thus, these Psalms are connected by a focus on Yahweh's great name (see also Psalm 9:10). It is significant to note that the Christ is able to celebrate Yahweh's great name not only in times of victory (Psalm 8), but also in the midst of great suffering and when it appears that Yahweh has forgotten him (Psalms 9-14). Again, the thanksgiving and songs of praise by the Christ should be imitated by all of God's people at all times. Verse 2 concludes with the Christ using the name "Most High" in reference to Yahweh. See the note regarding the name "Most High" in Psalm 7:17.

¹³⁶ Regarding the "enemies" of the Christ, see Psalm 2:1-3.

¹³⁷ The Christ is not relying on earthly weapons to defeat his enemies. He knows that his enemies are defeated by Yahweh's glorious presence.

¹³⁸ Like a judge sitting in a courtroom, Yahweh sits on his throne giving "righteous judgment". Yahweh is portrayed as a righteous judge from the earliest chapters of Scripture. In his prayers regarding the people in the city of Sodom, Abraham refers to Yahweh as "the Judge of all the earth" (Genesis 18:25). He calls on Yahweh to "do what is just". Like Abraham, the Christian can take great confidence that God sees all and that he will do what is just. In regard to Yahweh sitting on his throne in judgment of the nations, see Psalm 2:4 and 96:10.

¹³⁹ Yahweh, as the "Judge of all the earth" (see Genesis 18:25), cannot allow evil to go unpunished. If he were to ignore evil, he would not be worthy of worship. Verses about Yahweh's "righteous judgment" are gracious warnings to those who oppose the Christ. The enemies of the Christ must repent before they are judged by Yahweh (see Psalm 7:12). Verses about Yahweh's "righteous judgment" provide great comfort to those who love the Christ. The evil done against them will be judged. The righteous judgment of God is also a theme in the New Testament. See Romans 2:5-16, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30-31, and Revelation 20:11-15.

5

You have rebuked the nations;¹⁴⁰ you have made the wicked perish;
you have blotted out their name forever and ever.¹⁴¹

6

The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;
their cities you rooted out;¹⁴²
the very memory of them has perished.¹⁴³

7

But the LORD sits enthroned forever;
he has established his throne for justice,

8

and he judges the world with righteousness;

¹⁴⁰ The judgment of the “nations” is a theme in this Psalm (see also verses 15, 17, 19, and 20). The **nations** are first introduced into the Psalter in Psalm 2:1. In the first 10 Psalms the word **nations** is used in reference to the enemies of the Christ and the judgment they will receive from Yahweh and his Christ (see 2:1, 2:8, 9:5, 9:15, 9:17, 9:19, 9:20, and 10:16). Later Psalms sometimes describe the **nations** in a different way. They are presented as worshipping Yahweh and serving the Christ (see, for example, 18:43-49, 22:27-28, 46:10, 86:9, and 117:1-2). How can both of these descriptions of the nations be true? They are true because of the gospel event. God sent the Christ so that those who were members of “the nations” might come near and be counted as his people (see Galatians 3:7-9, Galatians 3:27-29, Ephesians 2:11-22, and Revelation 9:7-17). Those who were among the nations become part of his people. However, the nations who will not put their trust in the Christ will be destroyed. It is grace from God to the nations that they are told of this destruction before it takes place.

¹⁴¹ This warning applies to all of the enemies of the Christ. Their “name” will perish. The name of Yahweh will be praised. Again, these verses are a warning to the wicked. They must repent before this takes place. Notice the comparison between the “name” of the wicked and Yahweh’s majestic name.

¹⁴² The cities of the wicked (verse 6) are compared with the city of God (verse 11). The cities of the wicked end in everlasting ruin (see Zephaniah 1:14-18). Zion (first referred to in Psalm 2:6) endures forever. Verses like these are warnings to the wicked that they will be judged. At the same time, these verses are comfort to the people of God. In other Scriptures, the cities of the wicked are summarized in one city—Babylon. The name Babylon becomes a picture of all of the cities of the wicked. The destruction of Babylon is portrayed in Revelation 18 (see also Psalm 137:8). The certain destruction of the city of man should provide great hope to those who are in Christ.

¹⁴³ Even as he suffers, the Christ reflects on victories that God has won in the past. This is common in the Psalms (see Psalm 22:3-5). The Christ’s reflection on past victories strengthens his faith in the midst of his sufferings. All of God’s people should imitate the Christ in this way.

he judges the peoples with uprightness.¹⁴⁴

9

The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.¹⁴⁵

10

And those who know your name put their trust in you,¹⁴⁶
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

11

Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion!¹⁴⁷
Tell among the peoples his deeds!¹⁴⁸

12

For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;

¹⁴⁴ Yahweh's throne is eternal. There will never be a different judge upon the throne. And there will never be a different "standard" used to judge the people. Justice is his standard. This is another example of the theology taught in the Psalms. People often say that a good God would not judge people. This is not correct. It would be unrighteous for Yahweh to refuse to judge the world. The Psalms teach that Yahweh does judge the peoples, and that his judgment is righteous.

¹⁴⁵ The hope of those who are oppressed is Yahweh. He provides refuge for his people. This does not mean that they will not suffer. It does mean that he will deliver them from their suffering.

¹⁴⁶ To know the name of Yahweh is to know his glorious reputation. When a person knows his name, that person will put all his or her trust in Yahweh. True knowledge of Yahweh always leads to faith. Faith in Yahweh never leads to defeat, for Yahweh has never "forsaken those who seek [him]".

¹⁴⁷ References to Zion remind the people of God of God's "place". Repeated references to Zion in the Psalms (and related terms like "the hill of the LORD") serve to remind God's people that they are citizens of another city—a city where righteousness dwells. Like Abraham, all of God's people are seeking "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (see Hebrews 11:13-16). Repeated references to Zion build faith and hope in God's people who are suffering in wicked "cities" throughout the earth. Zion is first referred to in Psalm 2:6. It is the current home of all those who are "in Christ"—even if they, like an ambassador living in a foreign country, are currently far from their true home (see Hebrews 12:22-24)!

¹⁴⁸ Compare to verse 1. In verses 11 and 12, the Christ commands those who know Yahweh's name (see verse 10) to imitate him in praising Yahweh.

he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.¹⁴⁹

13

Be gracious to me, O LORD!

See my affliction from those who hate me,¹⁵⁰

O you who lift me up from the gates of death,¹⁵¹

14

that I may recount all your praises,¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Even while they are suffering, Yahweh's people are commanded to praise him. Yahweh's people often suffer, even to the point of death (see Hebrews 11). Because of this, it may seem that Yahweh does "**forget**" his people. The Christ declares that Yahweh "**does not forget** the cry of the afflicted". Based on this truth, the Christ knows that Yahweh will deliver him (see verse 13). The people of Yahweh are, like the Christ, able to praise Yahweh even while they are suffering because they know that he "does not forget the cry of the afflicted"! The fact that he did not forget the Christ means that he cannot forget those who are "in Christ"! (The word "forget" is used in different ways in Psalms 9-14. See the introduction to Psalm 9.)

¹⁵⁰ Based on Psalm 2, those who "hate" the Christ are the "nations" and the "peoples". They will bring the Christ to "the gates of death".

¹⁵¹ Because Yahweh is a righteous judge who "does not forget the cry of the afflicted" (verse 12), the Christ knows that Yahweh will **lift him up** from "the gates of death". The verb that is translated "to lift up" can mean to raise someone or something to a higher place. It can also mean to exalt someone or something. Both of these things happened in the death and resurrection of Christ. God the Father **lifted him up** by raising him from the dead. And God the Father **lifted him up** by highly exalting him (see Acts 2:32-33, 5:30-31, and Philippians 2:5-11)! See also 1 Samuel 2:10, Psalm 3:3, and Isaiah 52:13.

(Jesus also uses this verb in two ways. He speaks of his enemies **lifting him up** by nailing him to a cross and the Father **lifting him up** by highly exalting him (see John 3:14-15, 8:28, and 12:32-34).)

¹⁵² The Christ desires to be saved so that he might praise Yahweh. Vows by the Christ to praise Yahweh are common in the Psalms. It is important that the people of the Christ see him as more than just their Savior. He is also their praise leader. The Christ's greatest delight is in praising Yahweh.

that in the gates of the daughter of Zion¹⁵³

I may rejoice in your salvation.¹⁵⁴

15

The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;

in the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught.¹⁵⁵

16

The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment;

the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. *Higgaion.*¹⁵⁶

Selah

17

The wicked shall return to Sheol,

all the nations that forget God.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Notice the movement of the Christ from the “**gates of death**” to the “**gates of the daughter of Zion**”. Verses 13-14 display Hebrew poetry in all of its beauty. These verses should be deeply pondered by all. These verses demonstrate that the Christ’s path to “Zion” (first mentioned in Psalm 2:6) passes through the “gates of death”. But the Christ knows that he will be exalted by Yahweh. He knows that he will be raised “to the gates of the daughter of Zion”! The rescue of the Christ from “the gates of death” was fulfilled when Yahweh raised Jesus Christ from the dead and highly exalted him (see Romans 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15). All those who are in Christ have been “baptized into” his death and resurrection (see Romans 6:1-11 and Ephesians 2:1-10).

But while some will be raised with Christ, others will, because of their sin, go down to the “gates of death”. Compare the “lifting up” of the Christ in Psalm 9:13-14 with the casting down of Capernaum, spoken by Jesus in Luke 10: “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades” (Luke 10:15). Thus, some will be exalted with Christ. Others, like Capernaum (which rejected Christ) will “be brought down to Hades”.

¹⁵⁴ The Christ will rejoice in Yahweh’s salvation. This salvation is not just the salvation of the Christ alone. It is also the salvation of all those who are in him! The people of the Christ will, along with their King, forever rejoice in this salvation—the salvation of THE ONE which resulted in the salvation of THE MANY!

¹⁵⁵ Psalm 2 indicates that the goal of the nations is to throw off the rule of the Christ. They attempted to throw off his rule by bringing the Christ to “the gates of death”. This is another promise that their plans will not succeed. This is another gracious warning to the wicked that they must repent.

¹⁵⁶ This is probably a musical instruction. This is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

¹⁵⁷ The nations that **forget** God will “return to Sheol” (see the note regarding Sheol at Psalm 6:5). To forget God does not mean that the nations do not know about God. Rather, it means they do not consider his greatness or his power, and they will not love him, worship him, and obey him. The Christ declares that the wicked will be judged for this great evil.

18

For the needy shall not always be forgotten,¹⁵⁸
and the hope of the poor¹⁵⁹ shall not perish forever.

19

Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail;
let the nations be judged before you!¹⁶⁰

20

Put them in fear, O LORD!
Let the nations know that they are but men! *Selah*

¹⁵⁸ The word “forget” is used twice in verses 17 and 18, but in very different ways. In verse 17, **forget** is used in reference to the punishment that is coming to “the nations that **forget** God”. In verse 18, **forget** is used in reference to “the needy” being **forgotten** by God. Even though they are currently being afflicted, the promise is that the needy “shall not always be **forgotten**”. See Psalm 13:1.

¹⁵⁹ See Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Mary’s prayer in Luke 1:46-55, and Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:3.

¹⁶⁰ The “hope of the poor” is in the righteous judgment of Yahweh. He will judge the nations. The righteous will be delivered by him. The prayers of the Christ should be imitated by the people of God.

Psalm 10 ...

... is connected in some way to Psalm 9. See the note regarding the connection of Psalms 9 and 10 in Psalm 9.

... features a unique pattern in which the poetic stanzas follow a pattern based on the order of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 9 began the alphabetic pattern. Psalm 10 concludes the pattern.

... is the second Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “forget”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “forget” in this group of Psalms.

... is the second Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “see”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “see” in this group of Psalms.

... is quoted in Romans 3:14.

Psalm 10¹⁶¹

1

Why, O LORD, do you stand far away?

Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?¹⁶²

2¹⁶³

In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor;

let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

3

For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,

and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD.

4

In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him;¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Psalm 10 probably does not include a superscription because it was once combined with Psalm 9. The Septuagint combines Psalms 9 and 10.

¹⁶² This Psalm begins with the Christ asking Yahweh why he is “standing” in a distant place and hiding while the wicked are attacking the righteous. The Christ knows that the wicked will be judged. However, Yahweh appears to be doing nothing to save the righteous. Often, Christians are confused because God seems to have forgotten them. The questions in verse 1 are questions that will be asked by every Christian, because all those who are in Christ will suffer. This Psalm demonstrates that prayers in which the follower of God asks questions of this sort are not sinful. They are a demonstration of faith, because they demonstrate that the one praying trusts God and is looking for God to provide deliverance.

While all Christians will suffer in this way, it is important to note that Christ Jesus was forsaken by God in a way that no one else ever experienced or ever will experience. Christ prayed a prayer like this from the cross (see Matthew 27:46 and Psalm 22:1). God “stood far away” and “hid himself” in Jesus’ time of trouble not because he is cruel, but so that salvation might come to the world. This Psalm, then, is about the suffering of Christ. It is also about the suffering of his people. The prayer in this Psalm is the prayer of the Christ. It is also the prayer of his people.

¹⁶³ In verses 2-11, the Christ reminds Yahweh of the prosperity of the wicked, and of the evil they are bringing upon the earth. It is significant to note that the Apostles quote other Psalms that describe the wicked in similar ways and they apply the verses to Judas. See Peter’s words in Acts 1:15-20, which include quotations from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. In the same way that Christ is the “blessed man” beyond all blessed men, Judas is portrayed as the wicked man beyond all wicked men.

¹⁶⁴ Pride is a great sin and is worthy of the greatest punishment. It is, as this verse demonstrates, a barrier to the worship of God. To refuse to seek God is a great sin and is worthy of the greatest punishment. See Romans 3:11.

all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”¹⁶⁵

5

His ways prosper at all times;¹⁶⁶

your judgments are on high, out of his sight;

as for all his foes, he puffs at them.

6

He says in his heart, “I shall not be moved;

throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.”

7

His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;

under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.¹⁶⁷

8

He sits in ambush in the villages;

in hiding places he murders the innocent.

His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;

¹⁶⁵ This does not mean that the wicked believe that God does not exist. Rather, based on 10:11, it means that the wicked do not believe that God will judge them for the evil they commit. This is an attack against the righteousness of God. See also Psalm 14:1 and 53:1.

¹⁶⁶ This is not, of course, true. The wicked **seem** to prosper at all times. They will, however, be judged. The righteous need to persevere in the dark days when it seems like the wicked are triumphing.

¹⁶⁷ Verse 7 is quoted in Romans 3:14. Paul quotes this verse—and several others from the Old Testament (including Psalm 5:9 and 14:1-3)—to prove that **all people** are wicked and are in need of God’s grace (see Romans 3:9-18). **All people**, according to Paul, “are under sin” (see Romans 3:9). He goes on to say that “**no one does good**, not even one” (see Romans 3:12). Because God is a righteous judge (see Psalm 9:4), **all people are in danger of facing God’s righteous judgment**. Beyond this, in this Psalm (and many others), the Christ calls Yahweh to pour out his judgment on the wicked. And Yahweh, as the Psalms have already demonstrated, hears and answers the prayers of the Christ! **Therefore, this Psalm is, first of all, a terrible warning to every person on the earth.**

However, the good news of the gospel is that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God invites wicked people to come to him in repentance (see Psalm 7:12), calling them to put their trust in the Christ. Those who obey God and who come to him in repentance and faith in the Christ are declared to be righteous (see Romans 3:21-26 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). **Therefore, because of the gospel event, this Psalm is transformed for the man or woman who is “in Christ”.** When a person comes to Christ in faith, he or she is no longer counted as “wicked”. Therefore, for that person, this Psalm is no longer a Psalm of fear and judgment. Rather, for that man or woman, this becomes a sweet Psalm of prayer. He or she joins in the prayers and longings of the Christ.

9

he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket;
he lurks that he may seize the poor;
he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net.

10

The helpless are crushed, sink down,
and fall by his might.

11

He says in his heart, "God has forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will never see it."¹⁶⁸

12

Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand;
forget not the afflicted.¹⁶⁹

13

Why does the wicked renounce God
and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"?¹⁷⁰

14

But you do see,¹⁷¹ for you note mischief and vexation,
that you may take it into your hands;
to you the helpless commits himself;

¹⁶⁸ In verse 11, the Christ concludes his description of the wicked one's actions with a description of the wicked one's inner thoughts. The wicked do not believe God cares about the evil he is doing. The wicked believe God has forgotten that he is the Judge of all the earth, and that God has hidden his face from the deeds that are done on the earth. These thoughts are great foolishness (see Psalm 14:1), for God sees all and, because he is the Judge of all the earth, he must act.

¹⁶⁹ The prayers of the Christ should be imitated by all those who are "in Christ". We should be calling on God to see the affliction of the righteous, to rise up, and save the righteous!

¹⁷⁰ It is great wickedness to say that God will not judge evil. This is a judgment against his righteous character. If God did not judge evil, he would not be worthy of worship.

¹⁷¹ In verse 11, the wicked say, "he will never see it". In verse 14, the Christ declares that Yahweh does see what the wicked are doing. **The fact that they have not yet experienced his judgment does not mean that he is not judging them.** This is important for believers to know about their God. The fact that he is not immediately punishing the wicked does not mean that he is approving of their actions. He is righteous, even when he is not currently punishing the wicked.

you have been the helper of the fatherless.¹⁷²

15

Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer;

call his wickedness to account till you find none.¹⁷³

16

The LORD is king forever and ever;

the nations perish from his land.¹⁷⁴

17

O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted;

you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear¹⁷⁵

18

to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,

so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² The Scriptures frequently say that Yahweh is the helper of the fatherless, the poor, the widows, and the oppressed. See also verse 18.

¹⁷³ The judgment of Yahweh against wickedness will be complete. No evil deeds can be hidden from his sight. This is a beautiful promise for the righteous. Every enemy of God will be defeated. As later Scriptures demonstrate, he does this by the rule and reign of the Christ. See 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.

¹⁷⁴ The “land” of Yahweh is the entire earth. He owns everything. This is a warning to the wicked and great hope to the righteous. They will not triumph.

¹⁷⁵ Verse 14 says that Yahweh **sees** the evil actions of the wicked. Verse 17 says that Yahweh **hears** the cries from his people. This is a warning to the wicked and a comfort to the saints. The fact that Yahweh hears the prayers of the righteous does not mean that he instantly delivers them from suffering. This Psalm, and many others, demonstrates that the righteous will suffer. However, even during the time period when the righteous are suffering, Yahweh helps his people by **strengthening their hearts**. He does this so that they are able to endure to the end. This Psalm, then, is much more than a call for the wicked to repent. It is also a call for the righteous to faithfully persevere in the midst of great suffering. It is the same message seen in each of the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Each letter concludes with a promise to “the one who conquers”.

¹⁷⁶ Compare the description of man in this verse with the description of man in Psalm 8. Only in Christ is a person transformed from the description found in this verse to the description found in Psalm 8.

Psalm 11 ...

... is the third Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “forget”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “forget” in this group of Psalms.

... is the third Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “see”. See Psalm 11:4.

... records the faith-filled words of the Christ as he speaks to those who are encouraging him to flee from the wicked. The reader needs to carefully study who is speaking in each Psalm and to whom that person is speaking. The previous Psalm (Psalm 10) records the words of the Christ as he cries out to Yahweh. The following Psalm (Psalm 11) also records the words of the Christ as he cries out to Yahweh.

... is divided into two parts (verses 1-3 and verses 4-7). In verses 1-3, after a declaration of his faith, the Christ quotes the people who are trying to convince him to flee. In verses 4-7, the Christ explains why his faith is in Yahweh and, thus, why he will not flee.

... is connected to key Old Testament passages pertaining to the judgment of the wicked. See Genesis 19:24 and Ezekiel 38:22. (All of Ezekiel 38 and 39 should be studied in connection with this Psalm, for Ezekiel 38-39 pertains to the judgment coming upon the enemies of God’s people.)

... is connected to key Old Testament passages pertaining to the inheritance of the righteous. See Ezekiel 39:29.

... is not quoted in the New Testament. However, key words in this Psalm relating to the judgment of the wicked and the inheritance of the righteous are referenced in the New Testament. See Luke 17:29, Revelation 14:10, 20:10, and 21:8. These passages are also connected to Genesis 19:24 and Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Psalm 11

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. OF DAVID.

1

In the LORD I take refuge;¹⁷⁷
how can you say to my soul,

“Flee like a bird to your mountain,”¹⁷⁸

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;¹⁷⁹

3

if the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ This Psalm is the faith-filled response of the Christ to people who have been telling him to flee because of the wicked. The opening statement in this Psalm is a firm declaration by the Christ that his faith is in Yahweh. The Psalm concludes with the Christ explaining why his faith is in Yahweh and, thus, why he will not listen to the people who are encouraging him to flee.

As with the other Psalms we have been considering, because of the death and resurrection of Christ, this Psalm is no longer just the song of the Christ. **Because of the gospel event, this Psalm becomes the song of all those who are in Christ.** Those who are in Christ have taken their refuge in Yahweh. And, like the Christ, they will not be conquered by the wicked.

¹⁷⁸ The Christ, again, is suffering alone. This time the suffering is coming not only from wicked people, but also from other people who are pressuring him to flee because of the wicked. The reasons the people want the Christ to flee are outlined in verses 2 and 3. The reason the Christ will not flee is summarized in the first clause of verse 1—“In the LORD I take refuge”.

¹⁷⁹ The wicked are pictured as warriors who are holding bows that are aimed at the “upright in heart”. The Christ is not afraid because he has taken refuge in Yahweh. This verse is echoed in **Ezekiel 39:3**. That passage demonstrates that the wicked will not be successful in their attempts to shoot their bows at the righteous. Yahweh says to the wicked, “I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand”. The promises of Yahweh should give great joy and confidence to the saints. See also 1 Samuel 2:4 (a poem about the Christ) and Psalm 7:12-16.

¹⁸⁰ The people who are talking to the Christ are afraid because the wicked **seem** to be all powerful. They **appear to be able to** do whatever they want and the righteous appear to be able to do nothing about it. The wicked **believe they can** destroy “the foundations”, and they believe that the righteous are powerless to act.

4¹⁸¹

The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven;¹⁸²
his eyes see,¹⁸³ his eyelids test the children of man.

5

The LORD tests the righteous,¹⁸⁴
but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

¹⁸¹ In verse 4, the Christ is no longer quoting those who are urging him to flee. Verses 4-7 is the Christ's answer to those who want him to flee. These verses explain why the Christ has taken refuge in Yahweh.

¹⁸² Even though he is currently being threatened by the wicked, the Christ recognizes that they are not in a position of authority. The Christ recognizes that Yahweh alone is seated in the position of power and authority and judgment. See Psalm 2:4.

¹⁸³ The Christ declares that Yahweh is not blind. He sees all of the deeds that are done by all people. He sees the actions of the wicked (see Psalm 10:11) and the righteous. He judges people based on what they have done.

Again, one of the themes of the Psalms in this particular section of the Psalter is Yahweh's sight. Does he **see** the evil deeds of the wicked? The wicked declare, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, **he will never see it**" (Psalm 10:11). Because they believe that God does not see, they believe that he will not judge them. The Christ declares that Yahweh does see—and he will judge the wicked (see also the words of the Christ in Psalm 10:14-15). The Psalms in this section of the Psalter are intended to encourage the righteous to stand firm even in the midst of suffering and persecution. Yahweh sees everything and he will deliver the righteous and give himself to them as an inheritance. The Psalms in this section are warnings to the wicked to repent of their wickedness before they are eternally judged by Yahweh (see Psalm 7:12-16).

¹⁸⁴ All people, even the righteous, are tested by Yahweh. Because of this, all people should pay careful attention to the words in this Psalm. Only those who are blameless in Yahweh's eyes may dwell with him (see Psalm 15). Only Christ and those who are in him are declared to be righteous. All others will receive the judgment promised in this Psalm.

6

Let him rain coals on the wicked;

fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.¹⁸⁵

7

For the LORD is righteous;¹⁸⁶

he loves righteous deeds;¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ The judgment is a major theme in the Psalms. It is first described in the Psalter in Psalm 1:5. According to Psalm 11, the punishment of the wicked will be “fire and sulfur and a scorching wind”. The reward of the righteous from Yahweh will be to “behold his face”.

It is significant to note that this Psalm uses key words that are also used in the description of the punishment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:24 reads, “Then the LORD **rained** on Sodom and Gomorrah **sulfur and fire** from the LORD out of heaven”. (The entire account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is found in Genesis 18:16-19:29). Jesus’ description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Luke 17:29 uses similar words: “but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, **fire and sulfur rained** from heaven and destroyed them all”. **These same words are found in the descriptions of the punishment that will come upon the wicked at the end of the age.** Ezekiel 38:22 reads, “With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will **rain** upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, **fire and sulfur**. So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD”. Revelation 21:8 reads, “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their **portion** will be in the lake that burns with **fire and sulfur**, which is the second death”. See also Revelation 14:10 and 20:10.

¹⁸⁶ The reason Yahweh punishes the wicked is because he is righteous. For him to ignore evil would be unrighteous. He must punish those who do evil. These verses are not indications that Yahweh is cruel. Rather, they are evidence that he is righteous and that he loves those who are righteous and who do righteous deeds. They are also gracious warnings to those who are wicked (according to Psalm 14, this is all people) so that they might repent.

¹⁸⁷ Yahweh’s righteousness and his love for righteous deeds presents a terrible problem for mankind, for, based on Psalm 14:1-3, no one is born righteous. No one does good deeds. The only hope for any man, woman, boy, or girl, is to believe in the Christ. God gives righteousness to those who have faith in Christ. See John 3:16-21 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. Those who have been given righteousness by God are then able to produce the righteousness demanded by God (see Galatians 5:22-23).

the upright shall behold his face.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Those who are righteous are promised an inheritance of incomparable worth: they will see Yahweh's face (see Revelation 22:3-4). To see Yahweh's face means that the righteous will live in the presence of Yahweh and will truly know him in all his glory. Moses was known as the prophet who spoke with God "face to face" (see Exodus 33:11). However, even he was not allowed to see God in all of his glory, because, as Yahweh said to Moses, "man shall not see me and live" (see Exodus 33:20). The Christ, however, does see God in this way, because he came from God and is holy and blameless (see Psalm 15 and John 1:18). Jesus Christ came so that people could be restored to the presence of God! People will be able to know God face to face only because their sins have been forgiven and they have been declared righteous in God's sight (see Ezekiel 39:23-24). All those who are "in Christ" will receive this inheritance. This inheritance for the righteous will be fully known when Jesus Christ returns. However, this promise is not just for the future. In Ezekiel 39:29 Yahweh declares, "And I will not hide my face anymore from them, **when** I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD". The Holy Spirit has been poured out! This means that the people of Yahweh are already seeing God's face, even while they are waiting for the day when the kingdom of God will be revealed in all its fullness! God's people are able to know him now! Jesus' words to Philip in John 14:8-11 confirm this truth.

Psalms 12 ...

... is the fourth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “forget”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “forget” in this group of Psalms.

... is the fourth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “see”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “see” in this group of Psalms.

... compares the words of the wicked with the words of Yahweh. The words of the wicked are false and deceitful (see verses 2-4). The words of Yahweh are pure (see verse 6). The righteous are recognized by the fact that they put their trust in Yahweh’s pure words.

... begins and ends with the words “children of man”. This title for mankind ties this Psalm together with the Psalms surrounding it. See Psalm 11:4 and 14:2.

... ends on a somber note. Most Psalms end on a note of victory. This Psalm ends with the wicked prowling and vileness being exalted. By ending in this way, this Psalm seems to be emphasizing the need for the people of God to continue in faith, even when God’s pure words have not yet come to pass.

... is not quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 12

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE SHEMINITH.¹⁸⁹ A
PSALM OF DAVID.

1

Save,¹⁹⁰ O LORD, for the godly one is gone;
for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.¹⁹¹

2

Everyone utters lies to his neighbor;
with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.¹⁹²

3

May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great boasts,

4

those who say, “With our tongue we will prevail,
our lips are with us; who is master over us?”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ See the note regarding the superscription of Psalm 6.

¹⁹⁰ The Septuagint reads, “Save **me**”. These are, as the reading in the Septuagint demonstrates, the words of the Christ.

¹⁹¹ The phrase “children of man” is used at the beginning and end of this Psalm. Between this **envelope** are verses about the wickedness of the “children of man” and of their war against Yahweh’s people. The first use of the phrase “children of man” in the Old Testament is in regard to the wicked people who, in direct disobedience to Yahweh’s commands to fill the earth, built a city and a tower (the tower of Babel) so that they might celebrate their glory rather than God’s glory (see Genesis 11:5). As this Psalm demonstrates, the inhabitants of the earth are still doing the same thing.

¹⁹² The words of the Christ are stunning. There are no godly people anywhere. There are no faithful people on earth. Everyone is a liar. See Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:9-18.

¹⁹³ The “children of man” think that they are all powerful and that they control their own destiny. Their power, they declare, is their words. See also Psalm 57:4. The Christ calls Yahweh to cut off their lips and their tongues. Yahweh alone will be exalted.

5

“Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan,¹⁹⁴
 I will now arise,”¹⁹⁵ says the LORD;
 “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”¹⁹⁶

6

The words of the LORD are pure words,
 like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
 purified seven times.¹⁹⁷

7

You, O LORD, will keep them;¹⁹⁸
 you will guard us from this generation¹⁹⁹ forever.

8

On every side the wicked prowl,

¹⁹⁴ The wicked “children of men” are trying to destroy the “poor” and “needy”. By using these words to describe the righteous, the Christ is demonstrating that these people have no resources by which they can save themselves. They are not strong, rich, or powerful. They are not making great boasts about their own power. They are not trusting in their own words. Rather, they are trusting in the words of Yahweh to save them (see verse 5). The words “poor” and “needy” are commonly used in the Psalms to describe the Christ and his people. See Psalm 35:10, 37:14, 40:17, 70:5, 72:12-13, 74:21, 86:1, 109:16, 109:22, and 113:7. See also Hannah’s words in 1 Samuel 2:8 and Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:3.

¹⁹⁵ See Moses’ words calling Yahweh to “arise” in Numbers 10:35.

¹⁹⁶ Verse 5 is a promise from Yahweh. He will, because of his love for “the poor” and “the needy”, rise up and rescue them. The prayers of the Christ in Psalm 10:12 are answered by Yahweh in his own words in Psalm 12:5!

¹⁹⁷ This quotation about the words of Yahweh is directly related to verse 5. In verse 5, Yahweh used his words to promise deliverance to the poor and needy. This verse about Yahweh’s words being “pure words” should give great confidence to the poor and needy. He never says something that will not come to pass. All his words are sure. But while this quotation about the words of Yahweh brings comfort to the righteous, this quotation about his words should bring great fear to the wicked. The wicked should fear because Yahweh’s pure words guarantee that they will be defeated by him.

¹⁹⁸ Yahweh is not, like the “children of man”, a liar. The Christ declares that Yahweh **will keep his words** (“You, O LORD, **will keep them**”) and will rescue the poor and needy.

¹⁹⁹ The description of the wicked “children of man” as “this generation” ties this Psalm to Yahweh’s description of the wicked people on the earth in Noah’s day (see Genesis 7:1). It also ties this Psalm to Jesus’ description of the wicked people who were rejecting him in his day (see Matthew 11:16, 12:41-42, 23:36, Mark 8:12, Luke 7:31, 11:29-32, 11:50-51, and 17:25). The righteous will always be guarded by Yahweh so that they are not conquered by “this generation”.

as vileness is exalted among the children of man.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ This Psalm is unique in that it does not end on a note of victory (compare this to the endings of Psalm 1-11). Even though Yahweh has said that he will arise and rescue the poor and needy, and his words are “pure words” and are guaranteed to come to pass, the wicked are, at the end of the Psalm, still prowling about exalting vileness. Thus, the Psalm ends with the people of God needing to keep trusting in the words of Yahweh even though his pure words have not yet fully come to pass. This provides a perfect connection to Psalm 13. Psalm 13 begins with the Christ wondering how long he must wait before he is rescued by Yahweh.

Psalm 13 ...

... is the fifth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “forget” (see Psalm 13:1). See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “forget” in this group of Psalms.

... is the fifth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “see”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “see” in this group of Psalms.

... is divided into three parts. The first part of the Psalm (verses 1-2) is set apart by repeated uses of the words **“How long”**. The Christ wonders **“How long”** Yahweh will forget him, **“How long”** he will suffer alone, and **“How long”** his enemies will “be exalted over” him. The second part of the Psalm (verses 3-4) is a plea from the Christ to Yahweh in order that his prayers might be answered and that he might be saved from his enemies. This part of the Psalm is set apart by the word **“lest”**. The Christ must be delivered **“lest”** he die and **“lest”** his enemies claim victory over the Christ and rejoice over his defeat. The third part of the Psalm (verses 5-6) includes three declarations of faith from the Christ, demonstrating that he knows that Yahweh will answer his prayer and he will be delivered.

... concludes with a promise from the Christ to praise Yahweh.

... is not quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 13

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1

How long,²⁰¹ O LORD? Will you forget me forever?²⁰²

How long will you hide your face from me?²⁰³

2

How long must I take counsel in my soul

and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

3

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;

²⁰¹ The words “How long” are repeated four times in verses 1 and 2. The use of these words demonstrates the strong faith of the Christ. He knows that Yahweh will keep his “pure words” (see Psalm 12:5-6) and will rescue him. However, he is, even as he waits, truly suffering. He is wondering how long he must wait for Yahweh to deliver him from his sufferings. These verses are a demonstration that it is not a lack of faith for Christians to pray this sort of prayer to God. In fact, it is a demonstration of real faith in his “pure words”.

²⁰² In this section of the Psalter, the author is emphasizing the word forget. The word is used in several ways in these Psalms. See Psalm 9:12, 9:17, 9:18, 10:11, 10:12, and 13:1.

²⁰³ The Christ is suffering because **Yahweh has hidden his face from him**. The reader, at least in this Psalm, is not told why Yahweh has hidden his face from the Christ. It is not because the Christ is wicked. He is righteous, and the glorious promise to the righteous is that, “the upright shall behold his face” (see Psalm 11:7). Why, then, is Yahweh hiding his face from THE righteous one? Those who know the gospel already know the answer to this question. Christ suffered and died so that he might bear the sins of the people of God. **Sin, therefore, is the reason why God temporarily hid his face from the Christ.** Yet, it is clear from this Psalm that the Christ knew that he would be delivered and he would see the face of Yahweh again (see Psalm 13:5-6 and 17:15).

It is important to understand that Yahweh will never hide his face from those who are “in Christ”. Those who are “in Christ” will, like their Savior, need to endure long periods of suffering when they are waiting for God to keep his “pure words”. During these times of suffering, it may **appear** that God has forgotten his promises and is hiding his face from those he loves. However, this is different from the experience of the Christ. As the divine substitute for all the people of God, Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God. The Christian will never bear God’s wrath. Even in times of great suffering, Yahweh’s face shines upon the righteous. This is true because of the gospel event. Jesus has promised to be with his people always (see Matthew 28:20) and to constantly be revealing the Father’s face to them (see John 14:8-11).

light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,²⁰⁴

4

lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”

lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

5

But I have trusted in your steadfast love,²⁰⁵

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.²⁰⁶

6

I will sing to the LORD,

because he has dealt bountifully with me.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ The Christ knows that he will “sleep the sleep of death” if Yahweh does not rescue him. Christ did actually die, as the New Testament makes clear. However, he was rescued out of death by God the Father. God did “light up [his] eyes” and raise him from the dead (see Psalm 9:13 and Romans 1:4).

If the Christ were to be defeated by his enemies, this would mean that Yahweh’s declarations regarding the rule and reign of Christ in Psalm 2 were not true. It would mean that his “pure words” in Psalm 12 were not true. Thus, if the enemies of the Christ were to triumph over him, they would be proving Yahweh to be a liar and they would be triumphing over Yahweh himself!

²⁰⁵ These are the words of the Christ. He trusts in Yahweh’s “steadfast love”. The word translated “steadfast love” in the ESV (or sometimes “mercy”) is a major theme in the Psalms. It is used 123 times. Yahweh’s “steadfast love” of the Christ is the way he demonstrates his “steadfast love” to his people. Carefully studying how this word (the word translated “steadfast love” is one word in the Hebrew) is used throughout the Bible is a great help to the preacher. In book 1 of the Psalms, “steadfast love” is used in 5:7, 6:4, 13:5, 17:7, 18:50, 21:7, 23:6 (because the words of Psalm 23 are so well known, the word “mercy” is used in place of “steadfast love” in this verse), 25:6-7, 25:10, 26:3, 31:7, 31:16, 31:21, 32:10, 33:5, 33:18, 33:22, 36:5, 36:7, 36:10, 40:10, and 40:11.

²⁰⁶ Note the connection between Yahweh’s “steadfast love” in the first clause of this verse with “salvation” in the second clause of this verse. Salvation is deeply connected to Yahweh’s great love for the Christ (and for those who are “in him”). See John 3:16-18 and Romans 5:8.

²⁰⁷ The Christ promises to praise Yahweh upon his deliverance. All Christians should praise God for the deliverance of the Christ, for if he was not saved out of death, no one could be saved from death. The promise by the Christ that he will praise Yahweh appears frequently in the Psalms.

Psalm 14 ...

... is the sixth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “forget”. See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “forget” in this group of Psalms.

... is the sixth Psalm in a group of Psalms (9-14) that focus on the word “see” (see Psalm 14:2). See the note in Psalm 9 regarding the use of the word “see” in this group of Psalms.

... is closely connected with Psalm 15. Psalm 14 describes the absolute wickedness of the “children of men”. Psalm 15 describes the absolute holiness of those who “dwell on [Yahweh’s] holy hill”.

... describes the sinfulness of mankind.

... demonstrates the holiness of Yahweh.

... should fill the wicked with great fear.

... should fill the righteous with great hope (because of the promises spoken to the righteous in verses 5-7).

... is virtually identical to Psalm 53.

... is connected to Deuteronomy 30:3.

... is quoted in Romans 3:10-12.

Psalm 14²⁰⁸

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. OF DAVID.

1

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”²⁰⁹

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,

²⁰⁸ **Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are virtually identical.** Repeating this Psalm strongly emphasizes the importance of the subject of this Psalm. This repeating of the Psalm should be seen as intentional.

²⁰⁹ **These are the words of the Christ as he considers the rest of mankind.** The Christ considers the evil hearts of all of the people and all the wicked deeds that are done by each person. He doesn’t merely consider the evil things that people do. He also considers evil attitudes that people have within themselves. The Christ is greatly grieved at the evil he sees. He does not include himself among the wicked. This Psalm does not say that the Christ is committing evil actions and harboring evil thoughts. Rather, he longs for God to bring his righteousness and salvation to the earth (see verse 7). This was true of Jesus Christ. He alone was (and is) without sin. He came to earth because the people on the earth are guilty of great sin against a holy God. Carefully read Jesus’ words in John 3:16-18: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God”.

The opening words in the Psalm (“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”) are very similar to Psalm 10:4. This appears to be one reason why these Psalms have been placed near to each other. The wicked believe, “There is no God”. This does not mean that they are atheists. Rather, it means that they do not believe in the one true God described in the Old Testament and New Testament. According to the opening statement in this Psalm, if a person does not put their trust in the one true God, that person is a fool. A fool is much more than simply an ignorant person. A fool is someone who is deserving of punishment because he or she purposely ignores God and does not seek him. Because of this, the fool commits great crimes against God and against humanity.

there is none who does good.²¹⁰

2

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.²¹¹

3

They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.²¹²

4

Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers

²¹⁰ According to this verse, no person on earth does good. In other words, the category of people called “fools” in verse 1 isn’t a small category of people. **All people** are “fools” and are deserving of punishment from God. According to the Christ, all people “are corrupt, they do abominable deeds”. This fact should cause all people to cry out to God for mercy, for, as the next Psalm makes clear, only those who are holy may enter into Yahweh’s presence (see Psalm 15:2).

Verses 1-3 are quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:10-18. Paul quotes these verses (which are repeated in Psalm 51:1-3) to prove that not one person on the earth is righteous. Many people think they will inherit eternal life because of their good deeds. According to this verse, however, no one will be saved in this way, for “there is none who does good”. All people have sinned and are deserving of God’s judgment. In this passage, Paul also quotes several other Psalms (5:9, 10:7, 36:1, and 140:3) and other OT passages (Proverbs 1:16 and Isaiah 59:7-8) to make the same point. The guilt of all people before God is a theme of the Bible. See also Mark 10:17-18 and Ephesians 2:1-3. Man was not created as a sinner. “In the beginning”, he was “very good” (see Genesis 1:31). However, because of Adam’s sin, all people became sinners. See Romans 5:12.

²¹¹ This verse teaches that **Yahweh sees** the true condition of every single person on earth. (Again, Psalms 9-14 focus particular attention on Yahweh’s ability to see.) No one escapes Yahweh’s scrutiny. The Christ poetically pictures Yahweh looking down from heaven upon people to see their true spiritual condition. Yahweh carefully considers the condition of **each person** to see if he or she seeks after God. The justice of Yahweh is clearly presented in this verse. He judges justly because he thoroughly examines each person.

In the Old Testament, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God because of their sinfulness. They tried to cover their shame with fig leaves (see Genesis 3:6-10). However, people are not able to hide their sinfulness from God. He knows the true spiritual condition of each person. He knows each person’s actions and each person’s thoughts.

²¹² Again, Paul quotes this verse in Romans 3:10-18. He quotes this Old Testament verse (and many others) to prove that no people are righteous in the sight of God. All people have sinned and are deserving of God’s judgment. Often, people will say that they will be saved if their good deeds are greater than their bad deeds. According to this verse, this is a false hope, for people do not have **any** good deeds in which they are able to trust. Before God, all people are guilty of great sin.

who eat up my people²¹³ as they eat bread
and do not call upon the LORD?²¹⁴

5

There they are in great terror,²¹⁵
for God is with the generation of the righteous.²¹⁶

6

You would shame the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is his refuge.

7

Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!²¹⁷
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,

²¹³ It is significant to note that the Christ calls a particular group of people “my people”. It is a great sin to harm, in any way, the people of the Christ. These people are identified by the fact that they have repented of their wickedness and have put their trust in Christ.

²¹⁴ People’s evil actions demonstrate that they have no knowledge of the truth. The person who fails to call upon Yahweh does not understand the weight of his or her own sin. The person who fails to call upon Yahweh does not understand that **Yahweh must judge sin**. The person who fails to call upon Yahweh does not understand that it is a sin to refuse to call upon Yahweh. The person who harms, in any way, the people of the Christ, does not understand that these people are precious to the Christ. The Christ will, because he is their King, protect his people and punish all those who oppose them.

²¹⁵ The enemies of Yahweh and of the Christ will not triumph. God is opposed to them and will bring “great terror” upon them.

²¹⁶ This verse presents the judgment of God against the wicked and the deliverance God grants to the righteous. This verse is a gracious warning to the wicked that they must repent. A person cannot say, “God will not judge me, for I am not guilty”, for, according to this Psalm, all people are guilty. This verse is also a gracious gift to those who are, counted as righteous because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This verse encourages the righteous to persevere in their faith, because “God is with the generation of the righteous”.

²¹⁷ The psalmist longs for the people of God to be rescued.

let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Verse 7 speaks of the time period when Yahweh “**restores the fortunes**” of the people of God. These particular words are highly significant. They first appear in Deuteronomy 30:3: “then the LORD your God will **restore your fortunes** and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the places where the LORD your God has scattered you”. This passage in Deuteronomy is a promise that Yahweh will, one day, bring his people out of their captivity. This captivity, as Deuteronomy 30:1-10 makes clear, is connected to the sin of the people. However, when Yahweh “restores the fortunes” of his people, they will no longer walk in sin. Rather, they will walk in obedience and they will be fruitful because Yahweh will “delight in prospering” them.

The psalmist sees all people, including the people of God, in captivity to sin. **He remembers** the promise spoken long before that the people of God would one day be delivered from their captivity. **And he calls** the people of God to wait for that day and to celebrate its arrival. Thus, this Psalm ends in great hope. (Later prophets also speak of the day when Yahweh will “**restore the fortunes**” of God’s people—see, for example, Jeremiah 33:11, Joel 3:1, Amos 9:14, and Zephaniah 3:20.)

When this Psalm was originally written, the time of the restoring of the fortunes of God’s people had not yet come. However, the gospels clearly proclaim that the time of the **restoring of the fortunes** of God’s people has come in Christ! Jesus came to “**save his people from their sins**” (Matthew 1:21). If you are “in Christ”, you have been brought out of captivity to sin and into the glorious freedom of the children of God (see Romans 6:12-14)! The Apostles clearly state that Jesus Christ is the one who causes all of the promises in the Old Testament to come to pass (see Acts 13:32-33).

With this in mind, consider the events that took place when Jesus was dedicated at the temple at the time of his birth. At that time, a man named Simeon picked Jesus up. Simeon was, according to Luke, “**waiting** for the consolation of Israel” (see Luke 2:25). After seeing Jesus, Simeon said that he could “depart in peace”, for he had seen the salvation provided by God. After Simeon, a woman named Anna saw the Christ. She immediately began “to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were **waiting** for the redemption of Jerusalem” (see Luke 2:38). These descriptions highlight the fact that, even 1,000 years after this Psalm was written, a group of faith-filled people were eagerly **waiting** for the people of God to be released from their captivity to sin. Scriptures like Psalm 14 (and many other Old Testament Scriptures) had filled their hearts with longing for the day when Yahweh would “**restore the fortunes**” of his people. They knew that the days of captivity to sin would be coming to an end! When they saw Jesus, they knew, by the Holy Spirit, that he was the answer! Jesus is the one commissioned by Yahweh to lead the people of God out of captivity in a “second exodus”. This “second exodus” from the captivity of “sin” is greatly celebrated in Isaiah and Jeremiah (see, for instance, Jeremiah 16:14-21).

It is important to note that Psalm 14 is a Psalm of David. Therefore, at the time this Psalm was originally written, the people of Israel were living in the Promised Land. They were not, at the time of the writing of this Psalm, living under a foreign power and they were not captives to any people. However, David writes as if the people of God are currently captives in a foreign land and he writes of their need to be rescued from their captivity. David’s words in this Psalm demonstrate that his reign should not be considered the “golden age of Israel”. His words demonstrate that David’s reign was a time of captivity to sin and that David recognized this (see 1 Chronicles 16:35). He was waiting, along with the rest of the people of God, for the one who would rescue them from their captivity to sin and bring them into a time of eternal joy and fruitfulness—the fruitfulness promised in Psalm 8 and, as we’ll see, Psalm 15.

Psalm 15 ...

... describes the person who is worthy to live in God's presence.

... demonstrates the holiness of Yahweh.

... should fill the wicked with great fear.

... should fill the righteous with great hope (because of the promise spoken at the end of verse 5).

... is the perfect description of only one man's life. Jesus Christ is the only person who could truly say that this chapter fully describes the way he has lived. **He is the only person of whom the words in Psalm 14:1-3 have never been true. And he is the only person of whom the words in Psalm 15:2-5 have always been true.** Jesus alone is without sin. Jesus alone is absolutely holy. However, all who are "in Christ" may, because they are connected to Christ, truly say that this chapter is a description of their life.

... is closely connected to Psalm 14. Psalm 14 describes people who are slaves to sin. Psalm 15 describes people who are free from sin and are "slaves to righteousness". The people in Psalm 14 cannot, because of their slavery to sin, obey God. The people in Psalm 15, because of their freedom, are able to fully obey God (see Romans 6:6-14). **Psalm 14:7 is a link between these two Psalms.** It speaks of the time when Yahweh "restore the fortunes" of his people. Psalm 15, thus, is a picture of the restored people of God walking in holiness because Yahweh has "**restored their fortunes**" in Christ.

... is a fitting conclusion to Psalms 9-14. Many of the things that are said of Yahweh in Psalms 9-14 are said of his righteous people in Psalm 15. The people of God have become imitators of Yahweh because their **fortunes have been restored** by him (see Psalm 14:7). They now see as he sees. They now judge as he judges. They now speak as he speaks. They are living as the people of God were intended to live (see also Psalm 8)!

... is very similar to Psalm 8. Psalm 8 describes the "ideal person"—the man or woman living the way Yahweh always intended. In the same way, Psalm 15 describes the "ideal person"—the man or woman living the way Yahweh intended. In one sense, both of the Psalms are only descriptions of one man—the Lord Jesus Christ. However, because of the coming of Christ, these Psalms have become true of a host of men, women, boys, and girls!

... has three main parts: (1) A question is asked in verse 1, (2) the question is answered in verses 2-5a, and (3) a promise is given in verse 5b ("He who does these things shall never be moved").

Psalm 15

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1

O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent?

Who shall dwell on your holy hill?²¹⁹

2

He who walks blamelessly²²⁰ and does what is right

and speaks truth in his heart,²²¹

3

who does not slander with his tongue

²¹⁹ Psalm 1 answers the question, “**What** is the rule for mankind?” The answer is “the Law of the LORD”. Psalm 2 answers a related question: “**Who** is the ruler over mankind?” The answer is Yahweh and his Anointed King (the Christ). Psalm 15 answers another important question that all people should be asking: “Who is allowed to dwell with Yahweh?”

This Psalm is an example of the **theology** that is taught in the Psalms. This Psalm teaches the truth about God’s standards of holiness and the truth regarding his requirements for those who will dwell with him.

God’s “holy hill” is Zion (see the note at Psalm 2:6). It is the “place” of his dwelling. To be allowed to dwell on God’s “holy hill” is the greatest treasure a person could ever receive, because God is there. To be barred from God’s “holy hill” is the greatest disaster a person could ever receive, because to be barred from God’s presence is to be absent from his presence and, therefore, from the love, truth, joy, beauty, grace, goodness, and holiness that are in him and come from him.

²²⁰ See the description in Psalm 1:1 of how the blessed man walks.

²²¹ The person who is eligible to dwell with Yahweh “walks blamelessly” and “does what is right”. However, the psalmist isn’t simply referring to actions that are external. The psalmist also says that this person “speaks truth in his heart”. Thus, the person who is eligible to dwell with Yahweh is holy externally and internally.

This same truth may be seen in Matthew 5:17-48. In these verses, Jesus indicates that the evil actions of person aren’t the only things that make that person guilty. Jesus says that even the evil thoughts of a person make that person guilty. For instance, Jesus says that adultery isn’t merely an external act. It is also an attitude of the heart: “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

This Psalm should be compared with Psalm 14. According to Psalm 14:3, **all** have “turned aside; together they have become corrupt”. The Psalm goes on to say, “there is none who does good not even one”. Thus, according to Psalm 14, no people are blameless. However, according to Psalm 15, only the blameless may dwell with Yahweh. The link between these two Psalms is seen in Psalm 14:7. Yahweh sent Jesus so that he might “**restore the fortunes**” of his people (see Deuteronomy 30:3). Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, those who are “in Christ” have been made holy.

and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

4

in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honors those who fear the LORD;²²²
who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

5

who does not put out his money at interest
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.²²³
He who does these things shall never be moved.²²⁴

²²² It is significant to note that the things that were spoken in regard to Yahweh are true of his people. Those who are holy see in the same way Yahweh sees (see Psalm 11:4-5). This means they judge justly. They do not honor the vile. Rather, they, like their God, honor those who are holy. They, like their God, speak pure words (see Psalm 12:6). They do not speak with “flattering lips” (see Psalm 12:2).

²²³ Verses 2-5a are clear. God’s standard is perfect holiness. Only those who are holy inwardly (in their thoughts) and outwardly (in their actions) may live in his presence. This presents a great problem for people, because **no people have met the standard outlined in verses 2-5a**. The Bible is very clear about this (see Psalm 14:2-3, Mark 10:18, and Romans 3:9-18). According to these verses, no one is holy. No humans meet God’s holy standard outlined in this Psalm.

However, the **good news** is that God has made a way for sinful people to be counted as righteous. He did this by sending the Christ. Jesus Christ, unlike every other person who ever lived, is holy. He never sinned. Consider the words that were spoken by God the Father at Jesus’ baptism: “This is my beloved Son, **with whom I am well pleased**” (Matthew 3:17). This means that God examined Jesus and found him to be absolutely without sin—pleasing to him in every way (see Hebrews 4:15). Christ meets the standard outlined in this Psalm. He is holy inwardly and outwardly. He is able to dwell with God. **The good news is that God has made a way for people to receive the same judgment from him that Christ receives.** All those who recognize their own sinfulness and put their trust in Christ receive eternal life. God forgives their sins and grants them righteousness. He counts Christ’s righteousness as their righteousness. He counts Christ’s death as their death. This means Christ paid the price for the sins of all of his people! See John 3:1-21, Romans 1:16-17, Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, and Ephesians 2:1-10.

Therefore, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, all those who have faith in Christ truly do meet the standard outlined in this Psalm. They meet the standard not because of their own righteousness, but because of his righteousness!

²²⁴ This promise should bring great comfort to the Christian. No matter what happens to him or her, God will protect his holy people. See Psalm 55:22 and 112:6.

Psalm 16 ...

... is a prayer for deliverance directed toward Yahweh.

As is the case with many Psalms, the subject of this Psalm is an innocent person (the Christ) who desperately needs help from Yahweh (see 16:1).

... is faith-filled praise to God given in anticipation of Yahweh's answer to the prayer for deliverance. Because of his initial words, it is evident that the Christ is suffering. However, he is not suffering without hope. This Psalm is filled with hope. The Christ knows that Yahweh will answer his prayer. He knows that he has a "beautiful inheritance" (see 16:6). The Psalm ends with the Christ rejoicing in the deliverance that he is certain will come to him and in the glories of eternal fellowship that he knows he will have "forevermore" (see 16:11).

... highlights the pleasures of life with God. Notice the words highlighting the delight found in fellowship with Yahweh: "delight" (v. 3), "pleasant places" (v. 6), "beautiful inheritance" (v. 6), "my heart is glad" (v. 9), "my whole being rejoices" (v. 9), "fullness of joy" (v. 11), and "pleasures forevermore" (v. 11).

... describes the sorrows of the wicked. See Psalm 16:4.

... describes the death and resurrection of the Christ.

Both the Apostle Peter (see Acts 2:22-36) and the Apostle Paul (see Acts 13:35) declare that the one speaking in this Psalm is the Christ. Both of these passages in Acts should be studied carefully and used when preaching through Psalm 16.

... is used by the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul to prove that Jesus is the Christ. See Acts 2:22-36 and Acts 13:35.

... is a model for God's people to follow. As the perfect man, the Christ models for all of God's people how they, as God's new creations in Christ, are to suffer, think, believe, pray, worship, and live. Thus, each verse of this Psalm models actions that believers are to take and attitudes that believers are to have.

... gives God's people hope, because God has answered the prayer spoken in verse 1. The prayer of the Christ ("Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge") has been answered! God has preserved the Christ! Therefore, Christians, because they are "in Christ", can take joy in their own preservation! Our preservation is tied to Christ's preservation.

... is a call for God's people to worship God. God has answered the prayers of the Christ in this Psalm. He has already delivered the Christ from death, raised him to life, and established him at his right hand. Because the Christ has been delivered, God's people should give great thanks and praise to God for the deliverance of the Christ **and** for the deliverance that will surely come to them because of their faith in the Christ.

... proves that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was clearly prophesied in the Old Testament and was not something invented by Jesus' followers.

... is quoted in Acts 2:25-28 and 13:35.

Psalms 16

A MIKTAM²²⁵ OF DAVID.²²⁶

1

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.²²⁷

2

I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you.”²²⁸

3

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,

²²⁵ This is the first “Miktam” in the Psalter and the only Miktam in book 1 (Psalms 1-41). The other Miktams in the Psalter are all grouped together (56, 57, 58, 59, and 60). All of the Miktams are described in the same way: “A MIKTAM OF DAVID”. It is interesting that this Miktam has been separated from the other Miktams and placed alone in book 1. It appears the editor intentionally placed this particular Miktam in this location for a specific reason.

Scholars are not certain what a Miktam is. The translators of the Septuagint refer to this as an **inscription**. In any case, Miktam told the readers and worshipers what type of Psalm this particular Psalm was. It told the readers and worshipers how they were to think about this particular Psalm before they read it and used it in their public worship. This is another reminder that the Psalms are to be used in public worship.

²²⁶ The Apostle Peter declares that this Psalm was written by David. However, Peter says that David was not writing about himself. According to Peter, David knew that he was writing about the Christ when he wrote this Psalm: “he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31). He knew this because he was a prophet (see Acts 2:30). David wrote these words “knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne” (Acts 2:30). This means that David had the promise recorded in 2 Samuel 17:1-17 in mind when he wrote this Psalm. He was thinking about the coming of the Son of God when he wrote this Psalm!

²²⁷ The fact that the Psalm begins with the Christ asking God to preserve him indicates that the Christ is under some form of attack. Based on Psalm 2 (which, along with Psalm 1, serves as an introduction to the Psalter), the attack against the Christ is from ungodly people who would like to throw off his rule.

However, while this Psalm is about the Christ, it is also about all those who are in him. Thus, this Psalm presents things that are true of all those who are in Christ. It models how those who are in Christ should pray.

²²⁸ The Christ is not, as verses 2-8 make clear, suffering because of his own wickedness. He is righteous. All of his hope is in God.

The statement, “I have no good apart from you” is true of the Christ and of all those who are in him. There is no blessing except that which has come from God: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17). See also Ephesians 1:3.

in whom is all my delight.²²⁹

4

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
 their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
 or take their names on my lips.²³⁰

5

The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
 you hold my lot.²³¹

6

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
 indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.²³²

7

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
 in the night also my heart instructs me.²³³

²²⁹ In verses 3-4, the Christ prays about others who are in the land. Verse 3 is in reference to the saints. Verse 4 is in reference to the wicked. The Christ says that he delights in the saints. This should be a comfort to all of those who have placed their faith in Christ, because it is true even today. Christ's delight rests in the saints. He is with them always (see Matthew 28:20), he nourishes them and cherishes them (see Ephesians 5:29), and always lives to intercede for them (see Romans 8:34).

²³⁰ The Christ does not delight in the wicked. This verse is a warning to all those who worship anything or anyone but the one true God. Those who run after other gods will be judged. This has been a theme of the Psalms. But this verse is not just for the wicked. It is also a gracious warning to those who follow Christ. No matter how hard the suffering may be, the Christian must not "run after another god". While running after another god may temporarily eliminate suffering, it will ultimately cause sorrows to multiply. The Christian must imitate the Christ and refuse to run after another god or to join in false worship.

²³¹ The Christ's trust is in Yahweh. All of his hope rests in Yahweh. This is true of all those who come to Christ. All the hope of the Christian rests in the gracious promises of God.

²³² The Christ is suffering persecution when he makes this declaration (see verse 1). This is an example of faith. He knows that, in spite of his sufferings, he has a "beautiful inheritance". This is true of all those who are in Christ. Verses like this are gracious gifts from God. The promise of a "beautiful inheritance" provides strength to endure in times of great suffering. See Romans 8:16-17.

²³³ Here we see an example of the Christ meditating on Yahweh's counsel day and night (see Psalm 1:2).

8²³⁴

I have set the LORD always before me,²³⁵
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.²³⁶

9

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.²³⁷

10

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,²³⁸

²³⁴ Verses 9-11 are quoted in Acts 2:25-28 (Peter quotes from the LXX). Peter quotes these verses to prove that Jesus was raised from the dead.

²³⁵ The LXX reads “I **saw** the Lord before me continually”.

²³⁶ “I shall not be shaken” does not mean, “I shall not suffer”. The Christ is suffering and asks for preservation from Yahweh. “I shall not be shaken” means something like “I will not be moved from my secure trust in and love of Yahweh and I will not be defeated by evildoers”. This is true of all of the elect. God will not allow his people to fall from faith.

²³⁷ The Christ is able to be glad and rejoice and live in security even though he is currently suffering. He knows that God will deliver him. The words “my **flesh** also dwells secure” are important to understand. The Apostles saw this as a reference to Jesus’ physical body. A foundational belief of Christians is that our physical bodies will be raised in the same way that Christ’s physical body was raised. Even if a Christian is killed, his or her “flesh” is secure. Regarding the resurrection of the Christian’s body, see 1 Corinthians 15:12-58. See also Daniel 12:2-3 and John 5:28-29.

²³⁸ Sheol is the place of the dead. It seems to be contrasted with Zion—God’s holy hill (see Psalm 15). Sheol is away from God’s presence. Those who go there have been “put to shame”. This means they have been judged by God (see Psalm 31:17). See also Jesus’ words in Mark 8:38. Sheol is the place of wicked individuals and wicked groups (the nations who war against God). Sheol is a place where people do not praise God because they do not think of him or remember him. This word appears 65 times in the Old Testament and 15 times in the Psalter (see Psalm 6:5, 9:17, 16:10, 18:5, 30:3, 31:17, 49:14, 49:15, 55:15, 86:13, 88:3, 89:48, 116:3, 139:8, and 141:7). Sheol is, according to the psalmist, the proper place for the wicked. It is not, however, the proper place for the righteous. **God is presented as the only one who delivers people from Sheol. He is also the one who assigns them to Sheol.** It is important to note that Sheol in the Psalms is described in a different way than Hell is described in the New Testament.

or let your holy one see corruption.²³⁹

11

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Peter quotes this verse in the sermon preached on the day of Pentecost to prove that Jesus was raised from the dead (see Acts 2:31). Paul quotes this same passage in Acts 13:35. Significantly, Paul says that these words, which were originally written by David, are God's words! (see Acts 13:35).

Jesus was raised from the dead because God did not "allow his holy one to see corruption". This means that he did not allow Jesus' human body to experience any decay while it was in the grave. God preserved Jesus by raising him to life. This verse is proof of the resurrection. Jesus is alive! This verse should provide great hope to all those who are "in Christ". He has been raised to life. Therefore, all those who are "in him" will also be raised to life. This means the physical body of the Christian will be raised. In the same way that the first piece of fruit plucked from a healthy fruit tree is evidence that the tree will produce more healthy fruit, Christ's resurrected body is evidence that all those who are connected to him will also be raised (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-58). This verse should provide great hope to all those who are in Christ.

²⁴⁰ The Apostles saw this verse as a reference to the ascension of Christ. After he was raised from the dead, Jesus ascended to heaven, and he is currently sitting at the right hand of God the Father. He is actively ruling from this position of power. Carefully read Peter's words in Acts 2:29-36. Also consider Psalm 110:1-2, for Peter refers to these two Psalms together.

Psalm 17 ...

... records the prayers and praise of one person who is being attacked by many enemies.

... contrasts the righteous character of the Christ with the wickedness of his enemies.

... seems to be part of a group of Psalms (16-18) that speak of the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Christ.

Psalm 19 seems to serve as a conclusion to this group of Psalms.

Like Psalms 8 and 15, Psalm 19 presents a view of a person who is free from sin and is living in perfect submission to the law of Yahweh.

... is not quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 17

A PRAYER OF DAVID.²⁴¹

1

Hear a just cause,²⁴² O LORD; attend to my cry!

Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!²⁴³

2

From your presence let my vindication come!²⁴⁴

Let your eyes behold the right!²⁴⁵

3

You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night,

you have tested me, and you will find nothing,²⁴⁶

I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.²⁴⁷

4

With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips

²⁴¹ This simple superscription is also used in Psalm 86, 90, 102, and 142.

²⁴² In verse 1, the Christ calls Yahweh to listen to his prayers because these prayers are related to what is **just**. This same word is also used in verse 15 (although it is translated “righteousness” by the ESV): “As for me, I shall behold your face in **righteousness**”. These two uses of the same word (one at the front of the Psalm and one at the end of the Psalm) form an **envelope**. The envelope emphasizes that this Psalm is about **the just cause** of the deliverance of the Christ and the punishment of the wicked. The previous Psalms (particularly 9-15) have emphasized the justice that is due to the righteous and to the wicked. Psalms 16-19 demonstrate that the Christ is innocent and that justice demands that he be saved from his affliction.

²⁴³ The Christ declares that his prayer is true. He is the man who “speaks truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:2).

²⁴⁴ If the Christ is not vindicated, the people who trust in the Christ will not be vindicated. Their deliverance depends on his deliverance.

²⁴⁵ Psalm 17 begins with the Christ praying that Yahweh’s eyes will “**behold**” what is right. The Psalm ends with the Christ declaring that he will “behold” the face of Yahweh.

Yahweh’s sight is emphasized in Psalms 9-18. The wicked say that Yahweh cannot see (see Psalm 14:11). The Christ knows that Yahweh does see (see also 18:24).

²⁴⁶ While the wicked say that Yahweh does not see anyone’s deeds (see Psalm 10:11), the Christ proclaims that Yahweh has tested him. The gospels declare that God has examined Christ and found no sin in him. See Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, and Luke 3:22.

²⁴⁷ Unlike the wicked, the Christ does not use his mouth for evil (see Psalm 12:2-4). Christ models the behavior of the righteous man described in Psalm 15:2-4. His words in Psalm 17 demonstrate that he is the one who can “dwell on [Yahweh’s] holy hill” (Psalm 15:1).

I have avoided the ways of the violent.²⁴⁸

5

My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.²⁴⁹

6

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my words.

7

Wondrously show your steadfast love,²⁵⁰
O Savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.

8

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,²⁵¹

9

from the wicked who do me violence,
my deadly enemies who surround me.

²⁴⁸ The way of a person has been a theme in the Psalter (see Psalm 1:6).

²⁴⁹ In verses 3-5, the Christ proclaims his innocence. He is not like the people described in Psalm 14. He is, instead, like the person described in Psalm 15. The innocence of the Christ is of the utmost importance, for if Christ was not innocent, he could not be the Savior of the world. This Psalm demonstrates that the Christ did not sin in word or in deed.

²⁵⁰ The deliverance of the Christ is the way Yahweh shows his steadfast love—not only to the Christ, but also to the world. See Romans 5:8.

²⁵¹ The Christ calls for Yahweh to, like a mother hen, place his wings over him for protection. All those who are “in Christ” can take great comfort in the protection given the King, for if he is safe, they are safe. See also Psalm 91:4, Ruth 2:12, and Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:37.

10

They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.²⁵²

11

They have now surrounded our steps;
they set their eyes to cast us to the ground.

12

He is like a lion eager to tear,
as a young lion lurking in ambush.²⁵³

13

Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him!
Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,²⁵⁴

14

from men by your hand, O LORD,
from men of the world whose portion is in this life.
You fill their womb with treasure;
they are satisfied with children,
and they leave their abundance to their infants.

15

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;

²⁵² Again, notice the contrast between the wicked and the Christ.

²⁵³ The wicked behave like a lion, seeking to destroy the righteous (see Psalm 22:13 and 21). After the Christ is delivered, however, the righteous are the ones who “tread on the lion” (see Psalm 91:13).

²⁵⁴ This is a prayer from the Christ that Yahweh will punish the wicked. This is a warning to the wicked that they will be punished.

when I awake,²⁵⁵ I shall be satisfied with your likeness.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ This verse is not talking about the Christ waking up from physical sleep. It is speaking about his deliverance from death. The fact that sleep is being used as a metaphor for death is not clear from this verse. However, it is clear when this Psalm is read in connection with the Psalms surrounding it (Psalms 16 and 18). These three Psalms, taken together, clearly speak of the death and resurrection of the Christ. Carefully consider Psalm 16:7-11 (this is quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:25-28). According to Peter, this Psalm is about the death and resurrection of the Christ. Psalm 18 is also about the death and resurrection of the Christ: "The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me" (Psalm 18:4-5). Psalm 18 goes on to speak of Yahweh rescuing the Christ from death and of the Christ, based on his resurrection, defeating all of his enemies. This is not the first time in the Psalter that death is compared to sleep. See Psalm 13:3: "Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed over him,' lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken".

²⁵⁶ The Christ says that he will, when he wakes up, "be satisfied with your likeness". This seems to be a reference to the joy and delight that will come to the Christ when he is delivered from death and brought into the presence of Yahweh. This verse provides the answer to the question asked by the Christ in Psalm 13:1: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?". The answer to this question is that Yahweh will not hide his face from the Christ forever. When he is raised from the dead, the Christ will "be satisfied" by seeing Yahweh. Readers of the New Testament know that this has already happened! The Christ has been raised and is, right now, at the right hand of God the Father.

Psalm 18 ...

... records the prayers and praise of one person who is being attacked by many enemies.

... contrasts the righteous character of the Christ with the wickedness of his enemies.

... is a model for those who are in Christ to follow when they are persecuted.

... seems to be part of a group of Psalms (16-18). Psalm 19 seems to be a conclusion to this group of Psalms.

... is connected to the poem celebrating the first exodus in Exodus 15.

... is quoted in Romans 15:9.

Psalm 18

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, WHO ADDRESSED THE WORDS OF THIS SONG TO THE LORD ON THE DAY WHEN THE LORD RESCUED HIM FROM THE HAND OF ALL HIS ENEMIES, AND FROM THE HAND OF SAUL.²⁵⁷ HE SAID:

1

I love you, O LORD, my strength.²⁵⁸

2

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

4

The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;

5

the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.²⁵⁹

6

In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

²⁵⁷ This long superscription is helpful to the reader, because it demonstrates that this Psalm is about the joyful praise of the King (the Christ) based on his deliverance from all of his enemies. The superscription serves to prepare the reader for what he will find in this Psalm.

²⁵⁸ These are the words of the Christ. They are also the words of all those who are “in Christ”. True faith in God necessarily includes love of God, for love of God demonstrates that a person sees God clearly and knows him. See Psalm 119:32, 145:20, Mark 12:33, Luke 7:42, John 14:15, 14:21-24, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, James 2:5, and 1 Peter 1:8.

²⁵⁹ See Psalm 16:10 and the note at 17:15. See also Jonah 2. Jonah is a type of the Christ.

7

Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.

8

Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.

9

He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.²⁶⁰

10

He rode on a cherub and flew;
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.²⁶¹

11

He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him,
thick clouds dark with water.

12

Out of the brightness before him
hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.

13

The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice,
hailstones and coals of fire.

²⁶⁰ See Psalm 97:2.

²⁶¹ Yahweh doesn't actually ride the clouds like a chariot. However, this is poetic language demonstrating his great power. It is significant to note that Baal is also described in this way in ancient near eastern literature. The fact that Yahweh is described using language that is sometimes used by worshipers of Baal does not demonstrate that Yahweh and Baal are the same god. Nor is this language used because the Israelites invented a new god (Yahweh) based on a Canaanite god. Rather, this is an example of **Polemical Theology**. By describing Yahweh in this way, the Christ is mocking Baal. By describing Yahweh in this way, the Christ is also emphasizing that Baal is not the god who rides on the clouds and he is not the god who delivers the Christ.

14

And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.

15

Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.²⁶²

16

He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.²⁶³

17

He rescued me from my strong enemy
and from those who hated me,²⁶⁴
for they were too mighty for me.

18

They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
but the LORD was my support.

19

He brought me out into a broad place;
he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

20

The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;

²⁶² Notice the connections between this verse and Exodus 15. Exodus 15 is a very significant poem celebrating the crossing of the Red Sea. The psalmist's quotation of Exodus 15 demonstrates that the exodus event celebrated in Exodus 15 was foreshadowing the far greater exodus event that is connected to the death and resurrection of the Christ. The poem in Exodus 15 is also quoted in Psalm 118:14, Isaiah 12:1-6 and Revelation 15:1-4. The books of Isaiah and Jeremiah focus a great deal of attention on the "second exodus" of the people of God that is connected to the death and resurrection of the Christ.

²⁶³ Again, notice the connections between the saving of the Christ and the exodus event. The salvation of the Christ is the greater exodus.

²⁶⁴ See Psalm 2:1.

according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.²⁶⁵

21

For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22

For all his rules were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away from me.²⁶⁶

23

I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from my guilt.²⁶⁷

24

So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

25

With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;

26

with the purified you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.

27

For you save a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.²⁶⁸

28

For it is you who light my lamp;
the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

²⁶⁵ For a description of righteousness, see Psalm 15. The Christ frequently proclaims that he has been saved by Yahweh because of his righteousness. This is perfectly true of Christ alone. However, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it is true of all those who are “in him”. See 2 Corinthians 5:21.

²⁶⁶ See Psalm 1:1.

²⁶⁷ The innocence of the Christ is a theme of this section of the Psalter.

²⁶⁸ The theme of God humbling the proud and exalting the humble is a theme of the Scriptures. See Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2. See also Matthew 5:3.

29

For by you I can run against a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.

30

This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

31

For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?—

32

the God who equipped me with strength
and made my way blameless.

33

He made my feet like the feet of a deer
and set me secure on the heights.

34

He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.²⁶⁹

35

You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your right hand supported me,
and your gentleness made me great.

36

You gave a wide place for my steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.

37

I pursued my enemies and overtook them,
and did not turn back till they were consumed.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ This is an example of the power of poetry. The Christ has been given great power.

²⁷⁰ This is a warning to the wicked. They will be destroyed by the Christ if they do not repent. See Psalms 2 and 110.

38

I thrust them through, so that they were not able to rise;
they fell under my feet.

39

For you equipped me with strength for the battle;
you made those who rise against me sink under me.

40

You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
and those who hated me I destroyed.

41

They cried for help, but there was none to save;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.²⁷¹

42

I beat them fine as dust before the wind;²⁷²
I cast them out like the mire of the streets.²⁷³

43

You delivered me from strife with the people;²⁷⁴
you made me the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.

44

As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me;
foreigners came cringing to me.

45

Foreigners lost heart
and came trembling out of their fortresses.

²⁷¹ Yahweh saves the Christ because that is justice. He does not save the wicked, because that would be injustice.

²⁷² See Psalm 1:4.

²⁷³ Many Psalms speak of the deliverance of the Christ. This one highlights the victories of the Christ that will take place after his deliverance. See also Psalms 91 and 110.

²⁷⁴ See Psalm 2:1. The deliverance of the Christ by Yahweh is the key to his victory over the nations and the peoples.

46

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,
and exalted be the God of my salvation—

47

the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples under me,

48

who delivered me from my enemies;
yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me;
you rescued me from the man of violence.²⁷⁵

49

For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing to your name.²⁷⁶

50

Great salvation he brings to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,²⁷⁷
to David and his offspring forever.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ These verses demonstrate how the events described in Psalm 2 took place.

²⁷⁶ The Christ promises to praise Yahweh. This is common in the Psalter. Christ is the praise-leader of the people of God. Very often, after a promise of praise appears, the next Psalm in the Psalter (in this case, Psalm 19) is a Psalm of praise.

²⁷⁷ This Psalm is about the steadfast love that Yahweh shows to his “Christ” (LXX). This is the second time this word has appeared in the Psalter (see Psalm 2:2). See also Psalm 20:6.

²⁷⁸ This ties this Psalm to the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. The “offspring of David” is Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:1). But the “offspring of David” is more than just Jesus Christ. It also includes all those who are in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 19 ...

... celebrates the words of God.

... demonstrates that God's words are not out of reach of humans. He has made himself known in the creation. He has also made himself known in the written word.

... demonstrates the attitude that the man or woman of God must have in regard to the word of God.

... is divided into three parts. Verses 1-6 describe the voice of God that is heard from his creation. Verses 7-11 describe the law of the LORD as it is seen in the Scriptures. Verses 12-14 are the prayer of the man who recognizes, loves, and desires to obey the voice of Yahweh. This person, like the "Blessed Man" in Psalm 1, delights in the law of Yahweh and meditates on it day and night. The Christ (and all those who are in him) is the person described in these verses.

... is a fitting conclusion to Psalms 16-18. Like Psalms 8 and 15, Psalm 19 presents a view of a person who is free from sin and is living in perfect submission to the law of Yahweh. Because of the death and resurrection of the Christ (see Psalms 16-18), people are able to see God, love him, love his word, and obey him.

... is quoted in the New Testament in Romans 10:18.

Psalm 19

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.²⁷⁹

2

Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.²⁸⁰

3

There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.²⁸¹

4

Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.²⁸²

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

5

which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

6

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,

²⁷⁹ This verse declares that God made everything. It also demonstrates that God made all things so that they would be constantly displaying the weightiness of his beauty and goodness and splendor. The creation account in Genesis 1 should be read in connection with Psalm 19:1-6.

²⁸⁰ These verses demonstrate that there is no place and there is no time when God is not making himself known.

²⁸¹ These verses demonstrate that God has made himself known to all people. No people have an excuse. The knowledge of God that goes out to all the world is a great gift to mankind. The Apostle Paul uses verses like these in Romans 1:19-20 to demonstrate that all people know God's laws and are, therefore, accountable to him. God will judge all evildoers.

²⁸² One of the purposes of creation is to serve as a voice for God. This explains why God created the stars and sun. Everything God created displays his glory.

and there is nothing hidden from its heat.²⁸³

7

The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;

8

the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;²⁸⁴
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;

9

the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.

10

More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.

11

Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.²⁸⁵

12

Who can discern his errors?

²⁸³ In the same way that nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun, nothing is hidden from God's influence.

²⁸⁴ Obedience to the Lord leads to great joy.

²⁸⁵ These are the words of the Christ. He celebrates the purity of the law of Yahweh. Once again, he demonstrates that he is the "blessed man" who delights in the law of Yahweh and who meditates on it day and night (see Psalm 1:2). Those who are "in Christ" rejoice that their King loves God's laws and always obeys them. Beyond this, those who are "in Christ", like their King, rejoice in God's word and his ways. See John 14:15.

Declare me innocent from hidden faults.²⁸⁶

13

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!²⁸⁷

Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

14

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Once again, the innocence of the Christ is a theme of these Psalms. The standard of innocence isn't the Christ's own feelings. Rather, it is the "law of the Lord".

²⁸⁷ The "law of the Lord" is the way God answers this prayer. It is a gift from God to those who desire to know his ways and to live according to them.

²⁸⁸ This is the prayer of the Christ. It is also the prayer of all those who are in him. Those who love God desire to walk in obedience. They are only able to do this because of the death and resurrection of the Christ.

Appendix

1

The Psalms covered in this book represent a small percentage of Psalms in the Psalter. There are many other Psalms. All of them, in some way, are related to the Christ and the gospel event. All of them should be studied with the greatest care. All of them are useful for teaching and preaching. It is the joy of the reader and the obligation of the preacher to discover the way each Psalm proclaims the Christ and the gospel event. Outlined below are a few of the Psalms that are particularly used by the authors of the New Testament.

Psalm 22 - This Psalm is particularly connected to the crucifixion (see Matthew 27:35, 27:46, Mark 15:24, 15:34, Luke 23:34, and John 19:24). However, this Psalm doesn't end with the crucifixion. It also celebrates the people of God who appear after the resurrection. The writer to the Hebrews uses this Psalm to refer to the nature of those within the church (see Hebrews 2:12). Peter uses this Psalm to encourage believers to be watchful and to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8). In Psalm 22, the Christ makes a vow to praise Yahweh (22:25). Psalm 23 is the next Psalm in the Psalter. Based on this vow by the Christ, it would appear that this Psalm should, first and foremost, be seen as a Psalm of praise from the Christ to Yahweh.

Psalm 34 - Based on his quotations from Psalm 34, it is evident Peter was thinking about this Psalm as he wrote his epistle. Peter quotes Psalm 34 in 1 Peter 2:3 and 3:10-12. See also John 19:36.

Psalm 37 - This Psalm repeatedly says that Yahweh will cause the righteous to "inherit the land" (see Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, and 34). This is a Psalm calling the righteous to persevere in their faith in the midst of persecution. It is evident that Jesus was thinking about this Psalm as he preached the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:5 and 6:33).

Psalm 40 - This Psalm is about Yahweh's will and how that related to the coming of the Christ and to his suffering and death. The writer to the Hebrews quotes this Psalm in Hebrews 10:5-9.

Psalm 69 - This Psalm is quoted in John 2:17, Romans 11:9, 15:3, and Acts 1:20.

Psalm 109 - This Psalm speaks of the suffering and deliverance of the Christ. Peter quotes this Psalm in Acts 1:20. It is no coincidence that this Psalm immediately precedes Psalm 110, which speaks of the events taking place after Christ's death and resurrection. These Psalms should be read together.

Psalm 110 - While many Psalms speak of the suffering and deliverance of the Christ, this Psalm particularly focuses on the work of the Christ after his exaltation to the throne (see Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Acts 2:34, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Hebrews 1:3, 1:13, 5:6, 7:17, and 7:21). Psalm 109 should be read in connection with this Psalm. The Psalms immediately following 110 should also be read in connection with this Psalm, for they portray the glory of life because of Christ's victorious reign.

Psalms 118 - This Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament. It pertains to the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ and to the building of the true temple of which he is the cornerstone (see Matthew 11:3, 13:35, 19:38, 21:9, 21:42, 23:39, Mark 11:9, 12:10, Luke 20:17, John 12:13, Hebrews 13:6, 1 Peter 2:4, and 2:7).

2

In some Psalms the psalmist speaks of his great iniquity. Can Psalms that speak in this way also be describing the Christ? The Psalms clearly speak of the righteousness of the Christ. From the beginning of the Psalter, he is presented as the “Blessed Man” who meditates on Yahweh’s words day and night. Many verses describe his careful obedience to Yahweh’s commands, even in the face of great persecution. In many verses, the Christ declares that he is innocent. He asks Yahweh to judge him based on his righteousness. However, that is not the only way the Christ is described in the Psalms. In some verses, the Christ proclaims that he is guilty of great sin. For instance, consider the following verses.

For evils have encompassed me
beyond number;
my iniquities have overtaken me,
and I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head;
my heart fails me. **Psalms 40:12**

As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have sinned against you!” **Psalms 41:4**

“Surely,” the reader might think, “these psalms cannot be speaking of the Christ, for Jesus never sinned.” While it is true that Jesus never sinned, the reader needs to remember that he did take upon himself the sins of the people of God. He was, because of this, counted as guilty of sin in the sight of God. This is why God poured his wrath upon the Christ. He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Corinthians 5:21**

The answer to whether this type of psalm can be about the Christ is clearly answered in the New Testament. The two psalms mentioned above are both quoted in the New Testament and they are connected to the Christ!

The writer to the Hebrews declares that the words of Psalm 40 are the words of the Christ. Notice how he quotes Psalm 40:6-8.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,
“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. **Hebrews 10:5-10**

Thus, even though the psalmist in Psalm 40 speaks of his great iniquity (“my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head”), the writer to the Hebrews declares that this psalm records the words of the Christ.

In Psalm 41, the psalmist, again, speaks of his great sin (“heal me, for I have sinned against you”). He then grieves over the betrayal made by a close friend, saying, “Even my close friend in whom I trust, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me” (v. 9). Jesus quotes this psalm on the night of the last supper, identifying himself as the speaker in the psalm and Judas as the betrayer.

“I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’” **John 13:18**

By Jesus’ use of Psalm 41, it is clear that he sees himself as the subject of the psalm!

The same thing happens in Psalm 6. The psalm begins with the following prayer: “O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath”. The wrath of God is connected to Yahweh’s anger regarding sin. Yet Jesus quotes this psalm two different times, thus connecting himself with this psalm (see the notes regarding Psalm 6).

The same thing may be seen in Psalm 31. In Psalm 31:10, the psalmist speaks of his iniquity. Yet Jesus quotes Psalm 31:5 as he is dying on the cross (see Luke 23:46).

Based on these examples, it is evident that the writers of the New Testament (and Jesus himself!) did not hesitate to apply even these psalms to the Christ. It is the obligation of the preacher to proclaim the riches of Christ even in psalms of this type.

These charts are related to note 17 in “25 thoughts to keep in mind when studying the Psalms” (see pages 13-14).

2 SAMUEL 23:1-7

Translating 2 SAMUEL 23:1-7

1	1	These are the last words of David—the declaration of David, son of Jesse, and the declaration of the mighty man raised up—concerning the Messiah of the God of Jacob and the pleasant songs of Israel.
2	2	“The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me,
b	b	and his word was on my tongue.
3	3	The God of Israel said,
b	b	to me the Rock of Israel spoke:
c	c	‘With the person of righteousness who rules, who rules in the fear of God—
4	4	even like the light of the morning the sun will rise—a morning without clouds: from brightness, from rain—grass from the earth.’
5	5	Surely is not thus my house with God?
b	b	For an eternal covenant he made for me/him, arranged in all and kept,
c	c	for all my salvation and all delight in me will he not cause to sprout?
6	6	‘But as for the worthless—all of them are like a thorn thrown away,
b	b	for will not with a hand they be taken,
7	7	and the man strike at them?
b	b	He will be armed with an iron and wood spear,
c	c	and with a consuming fire they will be burned in the end.”

2 Sam 23:1	
ESV (2011): “Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of the man who was raised on high , the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:”	the oracle of the man who was raised on high , the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:”
NIV (2011): “These are the last words of David: ‘The inspired utterance of David son of Jesse, the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High , the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the hero of Israel’s songs:”	the man exalted by the Most High , the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the hero of Israel’s songs:”
LXX: Καὶ οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι Δαυὶδ τοῦ ἐργατοῦ. Πιστὸς Δαυὶδ υἱὸς Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ πιστὸς ἀνὴρ, ὃν ἀνέστησεν κύριος ἐπὶ χεῖράς σου θεοῦ Ἰακώβ, καὶ εὐπρεπεῖς ψαλμοὶ Ἰσραὴλ.	the man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent
Douay-Reims (1610): “Now these are David’s last words. David the son of Isai said: The man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent psalmist of Israel said:”	the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent
Young’s Literal (1898): “And these [are] the last words of David: — ‘The affirmation of David son of Jesse — And the affirmation of the man raised up — Concerning the Anointed of the God of Jacob, And the Sweetness of the Songs of Israel:”	Concerning the Anointed
2 Sam 23:1–7, ESV	DeRouchie
Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: 2 “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, 4 he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. 5 “For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; 7 but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.”	These are the last words of David—the declaration of David, son of Jesse, and the declaration of the mighty man raised up—concerning the Messiah of the God of Jacob and the pleasant songs of Israel. 2 “The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, and his word was on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, to me the Rock of Israel spoke: ‘With the person of righteousness who rules, who rules in the fear of God—4 even like the light of the morning the sun will rise—a morning without clouds: from brightness, from rain—grass from the earth.’ 5 Surely is not thus my house with God? For an eternal covenant he made for me/him, arranged in all and kept, for all my salvation and all delight in me will he not cause to sprout? 6 ‘But as for the worthless—all of them are like a thorn thrown away, for will not with a hand they be taken, 7 and the man strike at them? He will be armed with an iron and wood spear, and with a consuming fire they will be burned in the end.’”



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