

## Introduction to the Psalms, Part 2 (Selected Psalms)

All right, so last week we looked at the Psalms as poetry. We talked a little bit about the structure of the Psalms, sometimes individual verses, and Hebrew parallelism. We talked a little bit about the Psalms as a testimony to God's grace, and the profound value of the Psalms to us as an instruction in worship, some of the theology of the Psalms.

Today we're looking at the Psalms as a book, at the structure of the Psalms. And just out of curiosity, does anybody—and I know that even in introducing this and then asking this question, obviously the answer is going to be revealed even in asking the question—but does anybody know what the first book printed on American soil was? It was the book of Psalms. It was called *The Bay Psalm Book*. It was printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1640, which was only twenty years after the pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. And that was the first book printed on what is now American soil. It's not the first book printed in the Americas because there were books printed earlier than that down in like Argentina and Chile and a few places in South America, but that was the first book printed on what is now American soil, *The Bay Psalm Book*. And a copy of *The Bay Psalm Book* from that original printing sold in 2013 for \$14.2 million. Isn't that incredible?

All right, before we talk about the structure of the Psalms, let me get one thing off my chest real quick. When you refer to the book of Psalms, we refer to it as the book of Psalms. When we are referring to multiple psalms, we can talk about Psalms 1 and 2, Psalms 23 and 24, Psalms 5 through 10, etc. But when we talk about Psalm 23, it's singular. This is my pet peeve. People who ought to know better, people who teach, people who are on podcasts, people who preach refer to “Psalms” 22. It's not Psalms 22, it's not Psalms 23; it's Psalm 22. It's like a book of hymns, right? We don't say, “Turn to hymns 212 and we'll sing ‘How Firm a Foundation.’” We don't do that. We say, “Turn to hymn (because it's individual or singular) 212,” not hymns 212. The same thing with Psalms. It's not Psalms 119; it's Psalm 119, an individual psalm. [someone comments] And so—[jokingly] you used up all your questions last week. Do you remember this? I will allow this one time. Yes, Revelation is another one. It's not Revelations 1:16. It's the book of the Revelation, so it's Revelation 116. Yeah, so if you want to be slapped, come up to me and refer to a psalm as “psalms.” Discipline yourself to get that right because it grieves me when people get it wrong, and I just think, “You ought to know better; you sound like a complete idiot when you talk like that.”

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OK, here is the overarching principle of psalm interpretation and the Psalter or the Psalms as a whole. This was given to us by Jesus in Luke 24:44. “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’” Notice there Jesus used it correctly, multiple psalms, like He knew what He was doing. Notice there that Jesus is—this is after the resurrection. He is talking to His disciples, and He is telling them that everything that is written about Him in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Those were the three divisions of the Old Testament. You had the law of Moses, you had the prophets, and then you had the poetry. There were other ways of dividing the Old Testament. You can speak of the law and the prophets, and that would also incorporate all of that, but this is a handy sort of threefold division. You have the Psalms, which would have been the other poetry section, Ecclesiastes, Job, etc. You have the law, which really covered the law and the time under the old covenant law, so it's Genesis through 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah. And then you have the prophets, which is the last part of the Old Testament. And Jesus is saying here in all of these divisions there are things that are written about Him.

Now the Psalms consist of five separate books, and by the way when we say that the Psalms speak of Christ, what do you think I mean by that? Do you think that I mean that there are a few individual psalms that speak of Christ? So for instance, if I asked you, “Are there references to the Messiah in the book of Psalms?” you would say probably, “Yeah, I think Psalm 2, something about God putting His king on Mount Zion. If memory serves, Psalm 23, ‘The Lord is my shepherd.’ Psalm 22, ‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?’ They gambled for my garments, and for my clothing they cast lots, and they pierced my hands and my feet, and my bones are out of joint. My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth—that's obviously a messianic psalm.”

Can you think of another one? Psalm 110: “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (v. 4). The Lord has sworn that you were a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Any others? Psalm what? Psalm—oh, can you prove the resurrection from the book of Psalms? The resurrection of Christ? That's Psalm 16. Remember, that's what Paul did and Peter did when they went into the synagogue. They pointed to Psalm 16 where David said, “You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay” (Acts 13:35). And then

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Peter says, “David wrote that, but David was corrupted, and therefore David must have been speaking about somebody other than himself. And therefore this One who did die and God did not allow to see corruption, this One is the Christ, and He now has been raised, just as you are all witnesses to these things.” So Psalm 16.

So we got Psalm 2, Psalm 16, Psalm 22, 23, and 110, right? There are a few others. In fact, I would submit to you that everything that is in the Psalms in some way points to Christ. And I'm going to try and make that case for you today. This is not to say that every individual statement can be interpreted as applying to or describing Jesus Christ. But I am saying that the Psalms themselves, and far more of them than we typically think, are actually Christ speaking or they are about Him.

All right, the Psalms consist of five separate books. So will you turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms, the book where there are more than one psalms, and you can turn to Psalm 1, right at the very beginning of the book. The Psalms consist of five separate individual books. So you'll see before Psalm 1, the title “Book One” there. If you were to turn over to Psalm 41, between Psalms 41 and 42, you would see “Book Two.” And what I have here on the screen is the structure of the book of Psalms. There are five individual books, and as you're reading through the book of Psalms, you will see that before Psalm 42, you see “Book Two,” before Psalm 73, you see “Book Three,” etc., all the way down. And there's varying numbers of psalms in each of the books. It's not divided up evenly like that, but it is divided up.

And there is a purposeful structure to this arrangement, not just in the order of the individual psalms but the order of the psalms in each book. In other words, these books of the Psalms are arranged in a theological order, which I'm going to show to you here in just a moment. But within each one of these books of the Psalms, the psalms themselves are arranged in a particular and intentional order, an order that is intended to reveal something about the theology of the book of Psalms. Some people think that the Psalms is just a collection of individual hymns or worship songs put together without any kind of order. In fact, for years, that is how I viewed the book of Psalms, but there is a structure to the book. And as we saw last week, there's a structure to the individual psalms, sometimes the individual verses, but then there is a structure to the way that these psalms are collected into these books, and then there is a structure to the series of books themselves.

The structure and the arrangement of the books point to Christ. In order to see this, I want us to focus for a moment on Psalms 1 and 2, which really introduce this book. And

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Psalms 1 and 2 serve as sort of a gateway to the Psalter, and I want you to imagine Psalm 1 is the doorpost on one side, Psalm 2 is the doorpost on the other side, and these two psalms, Psalm 1 and 2, are the ones through which we walk into the rest of the Psalter. And so what those psalms teach us and the way that they are structured and the way those two psalms go together—they are separate psalms, but they are connected in such a way as to give us an idea of what the rest of the book is about, and this is where you see the intentional design of the book of Psalms.

So, Psalm 1 describes the ideal man, and if you're keeping track of what each of these books is about, I haven't shown you that just yet. I will here in a moment. So don't start writing down "Book one is about this" because you're going to be really confused by the time we get to what book one is actually about. OK, Psalm 1 describes the ideal man, the man of the Word or the righteous man who is blessed by God. And that is why we have in Psalm 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (vv. 1–2). Now that describes the blessed man. Notice how the Psalter begins. This is the man that is blessed, the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. He is the righteous man, the blessed man. He does not pursue wickedness, he does not do wickedness, he does not go after the counsel of the wicked. And instead,

3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

4 The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Ps. 1:3–6 NASB)

That is an imprecatory promise, right?

The beginning of the book of Psalms, it is a contrast between the righteous man and the wicked. The righteous man is the one who walks in the law of the Lord, not in the counsel of the wicked. So there is this intentional contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous man flourishes. The righteous man who walks according to the Word of God, his delight is in the law of the Lord, he is the one who prospers. He is

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the one who flourishes. But the wicked are not so. The wicked will be driven away. They will be destroyed. The way of the wicked will perish. So here, the wicked are introduced at the very beginning of the book of Psalms. They're introduced. And they are introduced in terms of not walking in the way of righteousness, not being blessed, and instead being cursed, and their way ends up perishing.

Now, Psalm 2—so Psalm 1 contrasts the righteous with the wicked, and the righteous man is the one who walks in the law of the Lord. Then we come across the archway, as it were, over to Psalm 2. Psalm 2 is the other doorpost to the gateway to the Psalter. Psalm 2 describes this ideal man, and it describes the ideal man in terms of him being a king. So he's the ideal man in Psalm 1. He's the one who walks in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. Do any of us do that? Now, we strive for that. That is our goal, to bring everything to bear underneath of the Word of God, and to have the Word of God inform all of that, to walk in and to delight in God's Word. That is what we strive for, but do any of us fulfill that perfectly? No, we don't. We fail to do that, right? We fail to do that. So what we really need is somebody who is a king, who will represent us, who will do that very thing on our behalf. That is Psalm 2.

“Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’” (vv. 1–3) Now look at here. We have the wicked being described, and the wicked now are the kings and the rulers of the nations. And notice how the Word describes them there in verse 2: they take their stand and they take counsel together. What's Psalm 1 about? Blessed is he who does not walk in the what? Counsel of the wicked. The beginning of Psalm 2 is, “Here are the people who are the wicked. They are the kings and the rulers of the nations.” So the kings and the rulers of the nations, they are the wicked ones. And they are saying, “Let us cast their [that is, God and His Anointed] chains off us, those things that God binds us to and expects of us. We're going to cast those away, we're going to make our own rules, we're going to walk in our own way, we're going to pursue our own counsel.” That's the idea. Instead of following after the counsel of the righteous in Psalm 1, instead, we're going to pursue the counsel of the wicked. We're going to do our own thing.

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.

5 Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying,

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6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.

8 Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.”

10 Now, therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth.

11 Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling.

12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!  
(Ps. 2:4–12 NASB)

So notice at the beginning of Psalm 1, very first verse, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Then we come across the archway over to Psalm 2. Who is the blessed one? The blessed one is the one who does homage to this King. This King who succeeds in all the things that we fail to do, this King is the blessed one. This is the King who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, but instead His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law He meditates day and night.

So you have two courses being presented to you at the beginning of the book of Psalms: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. Persist in the way of the wicked and you will suffer punishment, you will be cut off, you will be destroyed. The way of the righteous, though we may pursue that, we fail to do that, but there is one King who came and did that on our behalf. He is the one to whom God has said—because the Father is pleased with this Son, He has said to this Son, “I will give the nations to you as an inheritance so that all the kings of the earth will have to do homage to this King.”

So here are our observations from Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. The world hates this king that has been promised. Notice that the world, the nations, the wicked, the rulers of the world, they are wanting to cast off the fetters, cast the cords from us, destroy that, put that off, and go their own way, pursue their own counsel. This is the war that goes back to Genesis 3:15 with the promise in the garden, with the serpent and the seed of the

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woman, that there will be constant enmity between them. And so as history unfolds, you have this constant war between the children of light and the children of darkness. And the children of darkness are those who pursue after the counsel of the wicked. The children of the light are those who trust in this blessed King. That's what the Psalms are telling us.

Psalm 2 warns that judgment will come against the wicked for that opposition and that they will perish in the way. You saw a reference to perishing in Psalm 1:6 and a reference to perishing here in Psalm 2:12. They will perish in the way. So there is a way that leads to perishing. There is a way that leads to blessedness.

Now these two psalms contrast in a number of points, and I want to put them up on the screen. You can see them here. In Psalm 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (v. 1) Then you go to Psalm 2: "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together" (v. 2). There's a contrast in the counsel, the counsel of the wicked and what the counsel of the wicked brings in Psalm 2.

And then there is a contrast of the blessed man. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (Ps. 1:1) Look at Psalm 2:12: "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" OK, so you see how the Psalms begin with a proclamation of blessedness to the one who walks in the counsel of God and keeps His law day and night. And then in Psalm 2, you have the one who is blessed is the one who takes refuge in this King, whom God has anointed.

And then there is a contrast here with perishing in the way. Psalm 1:6: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." And Psalm 2:12, "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" So we have a contrast between the forbidden counsel or the counsel of the wicked, which we are forbidden to take, and then the blessed man is the one who does not take that counsel and instead pursues the law of the Lord and the wicked then perish.

So this idea of sinning and therefore being judged and perishing, that's how the book of Psalms begins. So what would you expect for the rest of the Psalms? You'd expect to see some imprecations in there, wouldn't you? Some developing of this idea of blessedness

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and wickedness, counsel of the wicked, counsel of the righteous? You would expect to see maybe these themes developed as the Psalms unfold before us. They do tell a story. The wicked have set their desire against God and His Word. They hate truth and they hate righteousness. They do not walk in His counsel. The wicked, by the way, are not passive observers to this, but they are actively at war against God, against His King, and against His kingdom. That is how the Psalms are introduced. They therefore cannot be blessed, but rather the wicked must suffer destruction because they pursue the counsel of the wicked. They cast off the fetters of God. And therefore, if they do this, they are doomed to this destruction because this is what they deserve. And they have been warned about this at the beginning of the Psalms. Blessed is this man; perish will be this man. That's the warning. So then we would expect these themes to be developed through the rest of the book.

The blessing of God on His people comes through this King that is introduced to us in Psalm 2. And the judgment of God comes on those who are at war with this King that is introduced to us in Psalm 2. That make sense? The blessing of God is upon those who walk in the way of this King introduced in Psalm 2. The judgment and wrath of God is poured out against those who are at war with this King that is introduced to us in Psalm 2.

Now, who is the King of the Psalms? I think this is obvious. It's obviously Jesus. I'm not going to defend that, I'm just gonna state that. He is the one who is called the Son, the Son of God in Psalm 2. He's also called David's son in 2 Samuel 7. Second Samuel 7 is the covenant that God made with David where He promised to David, "I will seat one of your descendants upon your throne, and He will rule the nations, and there will be no end to His kingdom. His kingdom will be continually blessed for He will be the righteous Son of David." Solomon obviously was not that son. Though some elements of the Davidic covenant apply to Solomon, not all of them do, not all of them could, but David is promised another Son who would come from his line, to whom this kingdom, this eternal and worldwide kingdom, would be given. And so that is the King that is described in Psalm 2.

So the rest of the Psalms are about this King and His kingdom and about His subjects. This King then is the blessed man of Psalm 1, Jesus is. He is the blessed man of Psalm 1. He is the Son of Psalm 2. And He is the one to whom the kingdom is going to be given. And His subjects, this King's subjects, are promised an eternal kingdom. Now that is the background for the structure of the book of Psalms. Second Samuel 7, the promise to

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seat a descendant upon David's throne, and then David as he is speaking in the book of Psalms, we have descriptions of this King. So we have enthronement psalms where the enthronement of this King is described for us. We have wedding psalms where the wedding of this King is described for us. And the wedding psalms are Solomon speaking about him and his bride, but then you get the sense that there is another bride of this coming King who is also going to enjoy a betrothal and a feast with this King who is to come. And then we have psalms of ascent and worship and psalms which describe the coronation of this King and psalms which describe the triumphs of this King.

So in the book of Psalms, David is the representative king who speaks, but Jesus is the fulfillment of what David says in the Psalms, OK? When David speaks in the book of Psalms, sometimes he is saying things that can only apply to him. "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight" (Ps. 51:4). Is that David speaking for Christ? That's David speaking for himself, right? Showing that the judgment poured out upon him and his house, temporary and short as it was, was really because he did not walk in the counsel of the Lord or in the law of the Lord, meditating on His law day and night, but instead he pursued after the counsel of the wicked, which is the counsel of his own heart, to pursue Bathsheba. And so then David is judged for that, and he confesses in Psalm 51.

So not every statement made by David or the psalmist describes Christ, but when David speaks in the Psalms, we can, generally speaking, say that not only does David speak of this coming King, but there are times, not always, but there are times when David speaks *for* this coming King. In other words, David is saying the thing at times that this coming King is going to say. He is not just describing this King, he is speaking on behalf of this King, which is why there are words that are attributed to David in the Psalms, which also find themselves on the lips of Christ Himself, because Christ Himself is the one whom David is speaking for in the book of Psalms from time to time. I don't mean occasionally, I mean quite often, but it's not a hundred percent of the time. I want you to understand that. So you don't go home and read the book of Psalms and say, "Well, obviously our Savior is a sinner." That's not what I'm getting at.

All right, Augustine said Jesus is the singer of the Psalms. So when David speaks, he is speaking not only of Christ, but sometimes he is speaking *for* the Christ, for the Messiah. Derek Kidner says this: "It would scarcely seem too much to infer that wherever David or the Davidic king appears in the Psalter, he foreshadows in some degree the Messiah." OK, catch that. Wherever David and the Davidic king appear in the Psalter, he is

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foreshadowing in some degree and in some way this coming King that is promised to us in Psalm 2. James Johnston says this:

With this in mind, Psalms are about Christ in several ways. On the one hand, they make specific predictions that were fulfilled in Christ. On a deeper level, the Psalms point forward to Christ through the life, words, emotions, and experiences of King David as a whole. David is a model of the great King to come.

David is a model of the great King to come. That's the theological framework now for interpreting some of these imprecatory elements.

So now I want to show you that the structure of the book of Psalms, those five books which I opened with, that these five books, when taken as a whole, tell the story of this Messiah and the kingdom that He is to bring. OK, books one and two focus on David and his kingdom. That includes Solomon. Books three and four reflect the troubles of Israel and exile. And book five looks forward after the return of exile to the future triumph of this King. Book one and two—David and Solomon. Book three and four—the troubles of Israel and the exile of Israel, the afflictions that they suffered. Book five—post-exile. And by the way, in this structure, you're seeing all of Old Testament history basically unfolded from the time that God made a covenant with David. He put David on the throne, made David King, made that covenant, and then what you see in the book of Psalms is basically the story of Israel's kingdom foretold and described for the rest of Old Testament history.

All right, here's book one, Psalms 1–41. I'm going to give you the theme of it here in just a second. Psalms 1–41. All of these psalms were written by David except Psalm 10 and Psalm 33. Other than those two, all of the psalms in book one were written by David. The sons of Korah—sorry, the focus is on David and his experiences, his troubles, and his difficulties. Some of his difficulties were caused by the wicked, some of them were caused by himself. David's life was hard, and he faced daily foes. And so the theme or the way that book one ends, after describing David and all of his suffering and affliction at the hands of the wicked and the angst that he felt and the different opposition and hostility from enemies—Psalm 41:11–12: “By this I know that You are pleased with me, because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me. As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and You set me in Your presence forever.” That's sort of a triumphant note at the end of that first book because that first book is about David and his afflictions and his sufferings. You have the wicked described, his angst over that, his anxiety over that, how he was afflicted, what he endured.

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Psalm 22 is in that book, remember: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (v. 1) That's how David felt. But then in the middle of the psalm he says, “The Lord has not forsaken me. He has stood by me and been near the one who feels afflicted, and my bones are out of joint, and they pierce my hands and my feet and gamble for my garments.” That's all Psalm 22. That's David describing his own sufferings, but then when you read Psalm 22, you kind of get the idea that David's describing what he experienced, but he's not describing what he experienced, right? He's describing something that's beyond just him. But that's what book one is about. And the theme of book one is that God rescues His King from His enemies. That's Psalm 1–41. God rescues His King from His enemies. I'll leave that up there for a second so you can write that down and you might want to write down all five of these if you plan on doing the homework. I'll give you some time at the end if you're interested in homework. If you don't, then just be like Jason, don't write anything down at all. You're not going to do any homework, got it, OK. That was me, four years of high school.

All right, book two. Book two is Psalms 42–72. David is not the author of the first nine psalms in this book. The sons of Korah wrote Psalms 42–49. Asaph writes Psalm 50. And these psalms are not just about David, but these psalms in the second book focus upon God's people as well. In the first book, the emphasis is David and his affliction. In the second book, the emphasis is on the people of God and their affliction and their suffering. The rest of the psalms in that book, other than Psalms 42–49 and Psalm 50, which are written by the sons of Korah and Asaph as I mentioned, the rest of the psalms are by David. And what we see in book two is that the people and the King cannot be separated, that God blesses the people through the King. So the first one, God rescues His King from His enemies. Book 2, God blesses His people through the King. The King becomes the instrument, the channel of God blessing His individual people. Who are His people? The ones who give homage to that King, right? Psalm 2, book 2, that's the parallel. Do homage to the King, or you perish in the way. Blessed are those who take refuge in Him. So book two of the Psalms is about how God blesses His people through this King, who is the instrument or the channel of that blessing.

Psalm 72 is written by Solomon and it describes the reign of this righteous King. And then you sort of get the idea that the King who is behind this is another righteous one, a perfectly righteous King, who is not Solomon and wasn't David. There's another King that is to come. We're starting to get a glimpse of that by this point in the Psalms. Psalm 72 describes the reign of the righteous King, which is why you have that “May his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines; and let men bless

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themselves by him; let all nations call him blessed” (v. 17). Are you hearing the language of Psalm 2? Blessed are those who take refuge in Him, do homage to the Son, lest you perish in the way, right? Take heed, O kings, take heed, you rulers who walk after the counsel of your own ways. Do homage to this King and therefore be blessed. And then Psalm 72 ends with this proclamation: “May [this coming righteous King] his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines; and let men bless themselves by him” (v. 17). So the theme of book two is that God rescues His people from their enemies through His King.

OK, [book] one, God rescues His King from His enemies. Book two is God rescues His people from their enemies, but He does this through the King that is promised in Psalm 2. The blessed King, the one whom God establishes on Zion, He becomes the channel through which all the peoples are blessed. That's book two. Psalm 2 and Psalm 72 describe this blessed King and those who are blessed by Him in those two books. From Psalm 1 to Psalm 72 is the first two books. In that—Psalm 1, Psalm 72—you have the psalmist describing this blessed King and His people who are blessed through Him.

And those two psalms stand as bookends for what are called the prayers of David. That's the first two psalms. So we have in Psalm 72:20, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” You ever read through the book of Psalms, you get to that, Psalm 72, then you read that and you turn around a couple of psalms later and you're reading a psalm by David. You think, “Hold on a second. I thought I just read that the psalms of David are ended.” It's because, though, as we saw, most of the psalms in those two books are written by David, that's not all that David wrote. There were other psalms that David wrote, but it is believed, and I think rightly so, that these two books, book one and book two, were mostly written by David, and this is speculation, but it's not speculation that is outside of the mainstream of theology on this, that those first two books were mostly written by and probably almost exclusively compiled by David during his lifetime. Which is why you get to the end of book two, and it says, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” It's because during David's lifetime, those two books of the Psalms—other psalms had been written and not compiled, not organized yet, but those two books had been during David's lifetime. I think David was alive to see the first two books of the Psalms written and compiled and put into the order that they are.

Any questions on that before we move on? I'm not even going to repeat that for the recording. Thank you. That was high praise, but we'll just . . . Another one? Yes. Yes, Psalm 2 is a prophetic panorama of the Lord Jesus Christ. It describes this kingdom.

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OK, we're only two-fifths of the way through this, but we're three-quarters of the way through our time here. OK, so it is believed that David had a hand in organizing the structure of these first two books. The structure and the themes are stated in the first two books, and they are continued then for the next three books. And I would submit to you that whoever did this organization, which you've just seen a glimpse of now, whoever did that had a purpose in it. He had a theological purpose in mind. So some suggest that the people who, the ones who organized book three, book four, and book five—it's been suggested that that was Ezra, post-exile, that he did three, four, and five, continued what David had done earlier and collected the psalms that Israel had and put them into those books in that order. It's also been suggested that somebody else organized book three, somebody else organized book four, somebody else organized book five. We don't know who organized it. I think we can say with pretty good confidence that David had a pretty big hand in organizing the first two books, but who organized book three, four, and five? We don't know because they didn't sign their name to that, but there is an organization and there is a structure to those next three books, and it is intentional, it's purposeful.

All right, book three. Are we there yet? Yes, we are. Book 3 is Psalms 73–89, and here is where the Psalms take a sudden turn. They deal with a difficult time in Israel's history because they deal with Israel in exile for their sin. Some of the psalms in book three are written earlier by David, some written by David, some by Ethan, some by Asaph, but they are arranged in this book in order to help Israel trust God during a time of judgment. This third book of the Psalms asks some very difficult questions, like Psalm 73, why do the wicked prosper? That's how book three begins. Psalm 73, why do the wicked prosper? Asaph says, “Surely God is good to Israel, to those who trust in Him! But my foot had almost slipped when I began to look at the prosperity of the wicked. I saw how easy they are, how fat they are, how they die at ease, how everything that they do seems to flourish in this life. And then I came to realize when I went into the temple of God and the sanctuary of God that the wicked are not prospering in this life.” So book three begins with the struggle over the prosperity of the wicked. If you're under judgment and the nations have invaded you and destroyed you and plundered you for dozens and dozens or maybe even hundreds of years, you might start to wrestle with why is it that the wicked prosper? Why is it that Babylon prospers and Assyria prospers, but the people of God do not? Book three begins by asking that very difficult question.

Psalm 89 is in some ways the hinge of the whole book of Psalms. And this I think you should write down if you're taking notes, because this is significant. Psalm 89 is in some

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ways the hinge of the whole book of Psalms. And you will notice that book three ends with Psalm 89. When you get to Psalm 89, as he has wrestled with the prosperity of the wicked and why they're under judgment and why they're facing this difficulty, you get to Psalm 89, and here's what we read. Verse 3, because here's the question—and by the way, Psalm 89 recounts the covenant that God made with David, it recounts the promises that God made with David. Psalm 89 is about the covenant that God made with David and recounts those promises but then wrestles with those promises in light of the judgment that the nation was under for their sin. That's what Psalm 89 is wrestling with. And that's the crisis point, Psalm 89. How could God reject His people?

So we have Psalm 89:3–4: I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant [this is the psalmist quoting God]. I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations.” Psalm 89:28–29: “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever and his throne as the days of heaven.” That was indeed the promise that God made to David. Psalm 89:34–37: “My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful.”

By the time this psalm was written, Israel was likely either on their way into exile or in exile, and the people writing the psalm and reflecting upon this are wondering, “If God has promised to David, and God cannot lie, that He is going to establish a kingdom through David and give it to one of his sons, then why has the Davidic monarchy come to an end? Why is our nation in ruins?” And so then the psalmist is wrestling with the end of the Davidic line. Chapter 89, verse 38:

38 But You have cast off and rejected, You have been full of wrath against Your anointed.

39 You have spurned the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown in the dust.

40 You have broken down all his walls; You have brought his strongholds to ruin.

41 All who pass along the way plunder him; he has become a reproach to his neighbors.

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

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

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

45 You have shortened the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame.

46 How long, O Lord? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember what my span of life is; for what vanity You have created all the sons of men!

48 What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?

49 [And here's the question that there's no answer to in this psalm] Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which You swore to David in Your faithfulness? (Ps. 89:38–49 NASB)

You swore this to David. Promised to give him a king, an eternal kingdom. Now the kingdom is in ruins. All Your people are under judgment. They have plundered us. We have become nothing. What are You going to do with Your faithfulness, O Lord? You swore to David and You cannot lie. Now, book three is all about the angst, the suffering, and the affliction. And now what do we do? We have been judged. We are not the blessed man of Psalm 1 who have walked in the counsel of the Lord. Instead, we have joined forces with the wicked and we have pursued the path of the wicked. And now, what God promised in Psalm 1 and in Psalm 2, that the wicked will perish, that's us, Your people. That's David's line.

And that's how book three ends. [Psalm 89] Verses 50–52: “Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants; how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.” So you end with despair. I have to praise God, but these are all unanswered questions. God has promised me this, us this, And this has not come to pass. Instead, the very opposite has come to pass. And now what do we do? Now we just ask God to

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remember. Remember. Remember what You said to David. Remember Your promise; You cannot lie. And so book three ends with, “We're just going to cling to that.”

Now you have come from the giving of this King, the promise of this King to David, and now we've come all the way to the Babylonian exile, and the people now are suffering affliction for their sin. And so the theme of book four or book three is how could God abandon His King and His people? OK, look at our progress. God rescues His King from His enemies. Then God rescues His people from their enemies through this King. But then how could God abandon His King and His people? That's book three. How could God abandon His King and His people? Were we not promised that God would rescue and bless His people through this King? And now God has abandoned both the King and His people.

Book four is Psalms 90–106. These psalms were composed in exile during Babylonian captivity, at least most of them were. And this psalm begins to answer some of the questions that Psalm 89 raises. As these psalms recount the character of God, declare that He is still King over all the earth, He is still working for His people, He is at work among the nations, and the people are encouraged to think of God's work over the centuries as Psalm (particularly) 105 and Psalm 106 recount God's work for His people in the past. Psalm 105:5–9:

5 Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth,

6 O seed of Abraham, His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!

7 He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth.

8 He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations,

9 the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. (NASB)

Remember God had been faithful to His covenant to Abraham, so he is recounting, “God promised us the land, He brought us into the land, all the works that God did to do that, and He was faithful to do everything that He did.” And remember Psalm 89, book three, ends with, “Where's Your faithfulness, O God? How do You reckon this? Are You faithful?” That's the wrestling of the third book. And then the fourth book is, “God is

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faithful, just as He was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Now the Psalms are beginning to recount the faithful deeds and the works of God.

Psalm 106 recounts Israel's sin and God's faithfulness to her, even in spite of the sin. And Psalm 106—that is, book four—ends with these words: “Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name and glory in Your praise. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, ‘Amen.’ Praise the Lord!” (vv. 47–48) So book four ends with this prayer, “Gather us from among the nations.” You promised a King; You promised a delivery of people through the King. Your people rebelled, just like we were warned about in Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, and now the people rebelled. We went into exile. The Davidic kingdom is no more. It's been destroyed. So is God really going to be faithful to keep His word? Then you get into Psalm book four, where they're recounting the blessings and the faithfulness of God in the past. And book four ends with them saying, “Now, Lord, just be faithful. Gather us back in from all the nations. Bring us back from Babylon. Bring us back from where we have been scattered. Bring us back into the land to fulfill Your covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” So now they're just praying that God will return them back to the land that they have been exiled out of. So the theme of book four is that God is still King over all the world. That's Psalms 90–106. God is still King over all the world. And that's what [book] four is hoping for. That's what [book] four is all about, that God who is King.

Now, [book] five. So book four ends with them in exile, in captivity, asking God to bring them back to the land, out of Babylon, out of the nations where they've been sent and plundered, to bring them back into the land, put them back in the land. Book five, Psalms 107–150. Psalm 103, verses—oh my goodness, where did my time go?—Psalm 107:1–3: “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary and gathered from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” So here's God's promise fulfilled in His people. After how many hundreds of years of wrestling through “Is God faithful to keep His word?” now book five begins, “He has gathered us back into the land,” Psalm 107:3.

So now they're back in the land. God has punished them for their disobedience. They had not kept God's Word. And by the way, after being warned about keeping the Word and walking in the Word and meditating on the law day and night, they've gone through that, they suffered, the kingdom is destroyed, and now they're back in the land after the

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exile. What do you think would be the central idea now that they're back in the land? Obedience to the Word, which is why Psalm 119 is in this fifth book. Psalm 119 is right there in the middle of that because the reminder is, "Meditate on the Law of the Lord." "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart" (Ps. 119:1–2). That was the lesson that they should have learned from Psalm 1. They did not walk—they walked in the counsel of the wicked. They suffered the judgment. Now they're back in the land, and what is the lesson that they should learn? It's this. "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord" (v. 1). So what should they do now that they are returned from exile? They should walk in the commandments of God, just as Psalm 1 says.

So here's the theme of book five. God will send the greater King to rule His people. God will send the greater King to rule His people. So, God rescues His King from His enemies. God rescues His people from their enemies through that King. How could God abandon His King and His people? God is still King over all the world. That's the statement of faith. And then the Psalms end with this reminder that God will send the greater King to rule His people. Because even after exile, have we learned the lesson of walking in the ways of the wicked? We still have not learned that lesson. So we still need this King to come, the King promised in Psalm 2. We still need that King to come and to do on behalf of His people what His people cannot do and what no other king was able to do. And so God will keep His promise to David by sending this King. Psalm 110: "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (v. 1). That's book five, Psalm 110. "Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." So there's the promise of this King. So now, even at the end of the Psalms, the King promised in book two is now promised again in book five in Psalm 110.

Friends, this structure is just magnificent. The blessed man keeps God's Word, but he can't. And so God will send a King who will keep God's Word on behalf of us, on our behalf, and bless us because He is the Blessed One and we are blessed in Him. God blesses us through this King. He will be faithful to His people in spite of their disobedience. Their failures will not derail His plan. Even after their discipline, He will gather them together and keep His Word by giving the King that He has promised. And through that King, His subjects are blessed, and His enemies, though they may triumph for a time, which the Psalms are about, will finally be defeated.

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So the Psalms open and close with the same theme. And by the way, since we're here, here's your homework real quick. Pick one of these books and read through the psalms that are in this book and look for that theme now that you see it. Just pick any one of the five. I know some of you are doing the math, like, "OK, that's eighteen psalms." OK, don't do that math. Just pick a book of the Psalms and a theme that you're interested in and just read through that book and start looking for how that theme is developed now that you know kind of the structure of that whole thing.

OK, the Psalms begin and end with similar themes. Yes, here we are. Psalm 2: "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'" (vv. 2–3) But in the end, look at this. That's how the Psalms begin, the kings saying, "Let us tear their fetters off, let us reject their kingdom and their rule." In the end, Psalm 149, this is how the Psalms end:

4 For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.

5 Let the godly ones exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,

7 to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,

8 to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron. (Ps. 149:4–8 NASB)

How does the Psalms begin? The wicked saying, "We will tear off their fetters and their chains." And the Psalms end with the righteous saying, "We will bind the kings with fetters." Notice how we've come full circle? When will that happen? When this King who was promised to us in Psalm 2 finally comes back and establishes that kingdom in fulfillment to the Davidic promises and rules and reigns, and He will make the nations do homage to Him. And He will destroy the wicked. And we, the righteous and this King, will bind the nations and bind those kings and make them do homage. That is how the Psalms come full circle. "To execute on them the judgment written; this is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the Lord!" (Ps. 149:9)

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Notice the imprecatory elements. What is the honor of all His godly ones? To execute upon the wicked the judgment of this King, upon those who walk after the counsel of the wicked and will not do homage to this King. This is the ultimate recompense of the righteous over the wicked. This is what the Psalms promise. This judgment is visited upon the head of the wicked and justly so. And therefore, Psalm 150:6 ends with, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!" That's how it ends.

We're six minutes past. Our time is up. Angelika, that means you have no time to ask a question, but I will take one from Jeff in the back. Man, very good observation. Yes, Jeff's point is that the book of Psalms is a theodicy in the fact that it argues for God's faithfulness and His justice and His righteousness from beginning to end. It tells a story. So does Paul in the book of Romans. It is an unfolding along this same sort of theme and storyline as you get into Romans, basically Romans 1 all the way through the end of Romans 11. There's a lot of parallels here. This book could not have been written by mere men. It's amazing.

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