



Psalm

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25 Lantana Lane, Maxwell, Texas 78656

Email: biblestudy@wvbs.org Phone: (512) 398-5211

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

Instructor: Troy Spradlin

Biography:

Troy Spradlin began serving as the preacher and evangelist for the Margaret Street Church of Christ in July 2017. He and his wife, Andrea, had previously served as missionaries for Margaret Street to Asuncion, Paraguay in South America, where they worked with the Avenida Sacramento Iglesia de Cristo (Church of Christ) from 2010 until 2017. They were also instrumental in planting a new church in the city of Nemby, Paraguay (since relocated to the city of San Lorenzo). In addition, Troy has had the opportunity to do mission work in Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Brazil.

Troy holds a Master's Degree in Missions from the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, Colorado and a Diploma of Biblical Studies from the Southwest School of Biblical Studies in Austin, Texas. He also attended Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas.

While in Paraguay, he served as the Director of the Asuncion Bible Academy, a Bear Valley Extension School, from 2013 to 2017. He also served as an instructor for the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies, in Pensacola, Florida from 2017-2021.

These Course Notes were developed from the original WVBS Course Notes. (Much of this material was originally developed by Denny Petrillo, PhD.)

BACKGROUND

The Book of Psalms is the most popular book of the Bible. It is a book of timeless truths and prayers in the form of beautiful poetry. Getting acquainted with the Psalms requires a general survey of the book to answer questions about who wrote them, when they were written, to whom they were written, and what purpose they serve. In this section, we will answer those questions and provide a few more additional particulars about the book. Understanding these points of information will greatly aid the reader in their study of the Psalms.

I. PENMAN

- A.** We must recognize that God is the true Author of the Psalms. Paul wrote that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), and Peter explained how inspiration works, writing that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21) Thus, we use the word “penmen” for the psalmists and while each certainly drew upon their personal experiences and knowledge while expressing the things of the heart, it was divine inspiration that guided their pens. For this reason, their writings are included in the collection of God’s Holy Word.
- B.** In most cases, the texts of the Psalms do not indicate who the penman is by name. The only definite information about who wrote some of the compositions is found within the given titles. While not all of the titles contain the penman’s name, those that do present us with the following tradition:
1. David - the second king of Israel, called a “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22) has 73 Psalms attributed to him (mostly in Book I and Book II).
 2. Asaph - was from a Levitical family and founded the temple choir as chief musician (1 Chronicles 15-16) is ascribed to 12 Psalms (50,73-83).
 3. Descendants of Korah - attributed to 10 Psalms (42,44-49,84,87-88). A Levitical family, singers and musicians of the temple choir founded by Heman the Ezrahite (1 Chronicles 6:31-46)
 4. Solomon - wrote one or two of the psalms (72? 127). Third king of Israel, called the wisest man to ever live ... who built the temple in Jerusalem.
 5. Moses (Psalm 90). - Leader of God’s people during the Exodus.

6. Heman the Ezrahite (Psalm 88). Called "Heman the Musician" (1 Chronicles 6:33) and was founder of a temple choir.
7. Ethan the Ezrahite (Psalm 89). From a Levitical family and founded one of the temple choirs (1 Chronicles 16:41; 25:1-6).

II. PERIOD

A. There are generally considered to be 15 periods of Bible history (see chart of "Bible Periods" in the Appendix). The Psalms span more of those periods than any other book at seven. There are psalms whose dates correlate to the periods of: the Wilderness Wanderings, the Conquest of Canaan, the Judges, the United Kingdom, the Divided Kingdom, Judah Alone, and during the Babylonian Captivity.

B. DATES:

1. The book's date spans more than a thousand years. This is based upon the premise that Moses wrote some of the psalms in his lifetime and that the last psalm, believed to be Psalm 126, was written around the time the Jews returned from captivity. Thus, the date attributed to the book must include the times of when the various psalmists lived.
2. The dates for when some of the penmen lived include Moses (ca. 1405 B.C.), David (1020-975 B.C.), Asaph (1000 B.C.). No other psalm is attributed after 500 B.C.

III. PUBLIC

- A.** The Psalms were composed initially to be read and used by the nation of Israel. Thus, several of them (like Psalms 79, 137, and 150) have specific applications that were only for the Hebrews of the Old Testament, not for Christians today.
- B.** In contrast to such precise applications, the Psalms also contain many principles, timeless truths, and expressions that are still relevant and adequately useful for modern Christian life and worship. Understanding this detail is important for proper context.

IV. PURPOSE

- A.** The Psalms were composed for many different purposes. Here are some of the more common ones:

1. To praise God, direct one's devotion to Him, or offer thanks.
 2. A remembrance of God dealing with man, or to celebrate an event or victory.
 3. Prophetic language; descriptions pointing to the Messiah
 4. To confess sin, lament difficulties, express sorrow, the pain of affliction, or a crisis.
 5. Invoke God's wrath on rebellious sinners, or for oppression.
 6. Offering prayer; asking for His protection.
 7. Many of the Psalms also parallel specific events throughout Old Testament history.
- B.** A common theme noted within each psalm — is that mankind must trust in God regardless of the circumstances.
1. Psalm 1 introduces the theme repeated throughout the entire book and sets the stage. It clearly lets all mankind know they will have to answer to the Lord (732 times). It ends with the thematic phrase: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous. But the way of the wicked will perish."
 2. Concerning the theme observed in the Book of Psalms, we can consider the book as a series of devotional songs designed to instruct man concerning two primary choices in life:
 - a) **To live one's life pleasing to the Lord.** If one is concerned about living one's life pleasing to the Lord, many psalms are directed that way: thinking righteously, hearing and obeying the Lord, talking about salvation, and praising Him. The righteous make a concerted effort to stay away from the wicked.
 - b) **To live one's life pleasing self.** Many of the Psalms describe the person who is more concerned about pleasing self.

V. PARTICULARS

- A.** The book's original title is the Hebrew word "Tehillim," meaning "Praise." Sometimes, the words "Seper Tehillim" were used, which means "The Book of Praises." Our modern-day Bibles derived the book's name from

the Greek words “Psalmoi” or “Psalterion,” which refer to songs or a book of songs. The title itself indicates its contents: Psalms is a collection of poetic writings.

1. It is a collection of 150 Psalms. Although the verse numbers can differ in several places, the Hebrew and English Bibles both correspond to each other, each containing 150 Psalms.
2. Confusingly, the Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate, which followed it, have 151 Psalms. Because of these texts, some have assumed there is an extra Psalm, but what truly happened was that some of the psalms were simply divided into smaller parts.
3. The Book of Psalms is not the only place that contains psalm compositions. Others include:
 - a) The “Song of Moses” found in Exodus 15:1-15
 - b) “Song of Deborah” in Judges 5.
 - c) “Hannah’s Prayer” of 1 Samuel 2.

B. The Book of Psalms is classified as “Wisdom Literature.”

1. This genre of literature appeared very early in the ancient Near East. Today, we have many extra-Biblical examples of this type of literature that are very similar to the Old Testament. The Hebrews themselves also wrote other books that have been classified as wisdom literature but were never considered part of the inspired, canonical books of the Old Testament. These apocryphal books are named “Sirach” and “Wisdom of Solomon.”
2. The meaning of “wisdom,” as we use it to describe Wisdom Literature, is a collection of sayings, songs, proverbs, moral lessons, riddles, allegories, warnings, meditations, and philosophical debates. While the inspired penman of the Bible recorded divine revelation and dealt primarily with religious subjects, they had interests in other areas of life. Wisdom literature is a prime example of that broad outlook. Wisdom comes to us in many forms. Thus, this is a type of literature that provides insight and good judgment about what one should do in a given situation in light of human values and goals.
3. Wisdom Literature has a more human and universal outlook rather than a national and particularistic one. Since the major focus does not concern Jewish history, the Psalms and Proverbs can be

universally applied to any people and any nation. This is also evidence of divine inspiration because the Jews were very nationalistic and loved to write about their own history, yet these books transcend that view.

- a) It is primarily practical rather than abstract or speculative. These writings are not theological treatises. They devote their attention to the workings of everyday life and its many problems and concerns.
 - b) There is no systematic development of thought, and generally speaking, there is no context in wisdom writings. Often, especially in the Proverbs, each proverb is a thought unit itself, independent of the next proverb. In the Psalms, there may be a general theme, but not necessarily an organized, developed thought, such as we might find in the books of Amos, Habakkuk, or Romans.
4. It is primarily practical rather than ceremonial. There is no emphasis on ritualistic observances. Rather, it focuses on the day-to-day realization of God as creator and Lord of all. It also is more concerned with the everyday challenges of personal relationships with one's wife, parents, children, workers, etc. It just deals with life.

C. Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament

1. Consider how Jesus described the Bible of His day and age, "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the **Law of Moses** and the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** concerning Me.'" (Luke 24:44) This is how the book, that we would call "the Old Testament," was described among the Jews. They are the ones who assembled the various books of the Old Testament over the span of several centuries (1400 to 400 BC)
2. According to Jewish tradition, all of the books of the Hebrew Bible were divided into three categories:
 - a) **The Law** - also called the Torah or the Law of Moses, which included the first five books, known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
 - b) **The Prophets** - which included the books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve. Notice that the groupings and divisions are

considerably different compared to the order of books in the Old Testament of modern Bibles.

c) The Writings - this grouping included the scrolls that ranged from poetry to books of records.

(1) The order varied over history, but the Writings themselves were divided into three sub-categories, two of which are relevant to our discussion in this course.

(a) The Book of Truth - included Job, the Psalms, and Proverbs.

(b) The "Megilloth" - this is a name given to the five scrolls that were read at the various feasts of the Jews. It included: Song of Solomon, which was read at the Passover, Ruth, which was read at Pentecost, Esther which was read at the feast of the Purim, Ecclesiastes which was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Lamentations which was read on the anniversary of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

(c) Another division included Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and the Chronicles.

(2) For visual clarification, a chart has been included in the Appendix that illustrates the common divisions the Hebrews used in the Old Testament. See Chart #1 in the Appendix.

D. Seeing Christ in the Psalms

1. The entire Bible is about "Redemption History." It is the account of man's creation, fall, and rescue. The salvation of man was provided through God's Son, Jesus, the Christ. Thus, Jesus can be found in every book. Jesus Himself said, "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." (Luke 24:44)

2. In the Book of Psalms, Jesus can be seen in:

a) His resurrection - Psalm 16

- b) His crucifixion - Psalm 22
 - c) His coronation - Psalm 24
 - d) His betrayal - Psalm 41
 - e) His triumphant entry - Psalm 68
 - f) His birth - Psalm 89
 - g) His victory - Psalm 110
 - h) The rejected cornerstone - Psalm 118
3. A more comprehensive chart of Jesus' portrayals in the Psalms is available in the Appendix.

VI. PLAN

- A.** The Hebrews traditionally divided the Book of Psalms into five sections or "books," a division that seems to have existed since ancient times. Perhaps the five books correspond to the five books of the Torah - Genesis to Deuteronomy. At the end of each section, there is a Doxology, or benediction (a phrase or hymn of praises to God), that serves as the dividing mark of each division.
- 1. Book I: Psalms 1-41.
 - 2. Book II: Psalms 42-72.
 - 3. Book III: Psalms 73-89.
 - 4. Book IV: Psalms 90-106.

- B.** Book V: Psalms 107-150. The plan, or outline of the book is laid out in the following chart using the traditional Hebrew divisions and presents some of the key concepts and references that correspond with each book.

PSALMS	BOOK ONE 41 Psalms	BOOK TWO 31 Psalms	BOOK THREE 17 Psalms	BOOK FOUR 17 Psalms	BOOK FIVE 44 Psalms
	1 - 41	42 - 72	73 - 89	90 - 106	107 - 150
Penman	David	David / Korah	Asaph	Anonymous	David / Anon
Pentateuch	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Content	Personal	Devotional	Historical	General	Prophetic
Spiritual	Humanity	Deliverance	Sanctuary	Reign of God	Word of God
Closing Prayer	Psalm 41:13	Psalm 72:18-19	Psalm 89:52	Psalm 106:48	Psalm 150
Theme	Worship and trust in God regardless of the circumstances.				
Key Psalm	Psalm 119:1-176				
Christ	"Coming King; Redeemer; Loving Shepherd; Righteous Sufferer"				

Remembering this general outline will serve you well in finding some Psalms. For example, the thought presented in Psalm 19 corresponds with Genesis. Psalm 119 corresponds with Deuteronomy, where the Ten Commandments are given the second time.

VII. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- A.** Learning all the facts and information given in this section is extremely useful for better understanding the Psalms and the psalmist's intentions. Since the book was written more than 2500 years ago, perhaps one might ask, "How does this book apply to Christians?" Fortunately, there are many things that the Lord's disciples can draw from these texts that are still applicable today.
- B.** The Psalms are beneficial for one's faith because:
1. God's word provides guidance and builds faith (Romans 10:17).
 2. They help us learn the importance of what it means to fear God.
 3. They provide many words and thoughts on how to praise God and pray to Him.
 4. They provide knowledge of the many fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah.

- C. The Psalms are beneficial in one's actions because they teach us how to better praise God with spirit and understanding (John 4:24) and they provide much strength and comfort in times of need.

VIII. KEY WORDS

- A. Righteousness, Hear/Obey, Save/Salvation, Praise, Mercy, Wickedness, Enemy.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES

I. A Special Study Approach Required.

- A.** Before one can fully understand and appreciate the Book of Psalms, a slightly different study approach is required than what is applied to other books of the Bible. This is due primarily to its literary style — poetic, wisdom literature. **Since the Book of Psalms is written in Hebrew Poetry, it stands to reason that a study of the book from a poetic standpoint should be included.** Verse-by-verse exposition of a text is certainly a useful approach for sound Bible study. Adding an analysis of the poetic structure of a psalm to the study can prove to be extremely beneficial for grasping the “heart” of the composition. This course will incorporate both approaches in the study of the text.
- B.** In order to glean the most from the Psalms, it is also beneficial to have a working knowledge of three important disciplines: (1) Biblical Hermeneutics, (2) the Characteristics of Hebrew poetry, and (3) the Classifications of the Psalms. In this section, we will expound upon each of these disciplines before beginning our study of the Biblical text. Learning these first will provide a solid foundation for properly interpreting and applying the Psalms to our own lives. The points made in this section will also be developed further and often referred back to as we progress through the text verse by verse.

C. Understanding Proper Hermeneutics

- 1.** “Hermeneutics” is the science of interpretation. With so much religious confusion in the world, employing proper hermeneutical methods is essential for arriving at the true interpretation of a passage. It is not a difficult process, but it does require some learning and discipline. Without teaching an entire course on hermeneutics (which is available through WVBS), here are some basic, key points that need to be acknowledged and put into practice while studying the text:
- a)** **Practice “exegesis” and not “eisegesis.”** These are two words that come from the Greek language meaning “to lead out of” (exegesis) and “to lead into” (eisegesis).
- (1)** In other words, to practice *exegesis* means to allow the Bible to speak for itself, explain, and interpret itself. One simply receives what is written as it was

intended by the writer. It is to “lead out” the intended interpretation of the text.

- (2)** To practice *eisegesis* is to read something into the text that may not be there. This happens by approaching the Bible with personal agendas and preconceived ideas or forcing it to say something it does not say.
 - (a)** Psalm 51 is a prime example of inserting something into the text that is not there.
 - i)** Some Bible translations render Verse 5 as, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” This has resulted in many teaching, and believing, that people are sinful and evil from birth. With this as their understanding, they say that it is necessary to baptize children.
 - ii)** However, the text itself does not support such a translation. The literal translations and most Bible versions render the verse as “I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.” This means David’s mother was in sin when he was born, not David himself.
 - (b)** More details on this passage will be discussed in the exposition section of the course.
- b)** Here are a few additional points on sound exegesis that we have drawn from Walter Kaiser’s book, “An Introduction to Hermeneutics,” that are extremely helpful for interpreting the Psalms:
 - (1)** First, determine the character of the wisdom material. Ask questions like: Is it a parable (Eccl 9:13-18), allegory (Prov 5:15-18), simile (Prov 25: 13,19-20,25), or other category?
 - (2)** Where the context is helpful, use it. For example, in Proverbs 16, we have a series of lines that are all based on “man purposes, but God disposes.” This is

one of the few places where there is a context to help explain the passage.

- (3) When no connections can be made from context, then use the more obvious line of the Hebrew parallelism to unlock the more difficult line.
- (4) Always remember wisdom literature is not meant to cover every situation. It is the nature of proverbial speech to assume that, all things being equal, what is stated will be true. So, there may very well be exceptions to the rule being stated.

2. Proper hermeneutics also recognizes that the Psalms are part of the Old Testament. This means that we must be very cautious with how we apply the Psalms to the Christian faith. There are specific parameters for what doctrines can be applied to the Lord's church and what cannot.

- a) Paul taught, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, ..." (Romans 15:4). We must also keep in mind that Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The Greek word for "teaching" is the same root word that is sometimes translated as "doctrine." The Psalms certainly include many teachings (doctrines) that are important to the Lord's church. For example, there are many things we learn about the nature of God, the essence of the Messiah, aspects of life after death, eternal judgment, the terrible effects of sin and evil, and concepts of salvation by God. These are all important doctrinal tenets relevant to Christianity.
- b) In addition to the above, the Psalms also contain many elements of Judaism and ancient Hebrew traditions that do not pertain to us today. The Old Testament, also known as "The Law of Moses," was written primarily for the Jews. According to Luke 22:20 and Hebrews 8:8-13, Christians live and operate under the New Testament, known as the "Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Therefore, many elements of the Old Testament (which includes the Psalms) are not binding to Christians and cannot be applied to the Lord's church. For example, the Psalms often mention the use of musical instruments in worship. The New Testament gives no such

command or example of instruments being used in Christian worship. Singing is the only example (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16; 1 Cor 14:15). The conclusion we can draw is that the Psalms cannot be appealed to for justifying the use of musical instruments in the church today, because it is part of the Old Testament.

3. In summary, when reading and studying the Psalms, keep in mind the principles of proper hermeneutics. A separate study of the discipline is encouraged. Many resources are available, including courses offered through the WVBS Online Bible School.

II. Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry.

A. Two-fifths of the Old Testament is poetry. As previously mentioned, the Book of Psalms is a collection of poetic writings, but their format and arrangement are not the same as Western-style poetry. Instead of rhyming and arranging words or lines with a specific meter, the Psalms are written in free verse, with pairs of lines making contrasts, forming parallels, or provoking a thought. It also incorporates a lot of figurative language.

B. Here are some of the more important features we must recognize in Hebrew poetry (each of these elements will be covered in more detail during the exposition of the text):

1. **Parallelism** is a literary writing style within a composition that balances a thought in one line of poetry to correspond closely with the thought of a succeeding line or lines in order to make a point.

Parallelism is the chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

- a) There are three primary types of parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic.

- (1) **Synonymous parallelism** (from the Greek “soun,” meaning “together”) involves immediately repeating the thought of the first line by using different words for the same thought in the second line. It incorporates synonyms of words and expressions to say the same thing but in a different manner.

- (a) For example, Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein.” The words earth and world are synonyms to each other as are the words fullness and dwell.

- (b) Or Psalm 49:1, “Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world ...”
 - (c) In both cases, nothing new is stated in the second line. It is simply restated using synonymous words and phrases.
 - (d) Other examples include Proverbs 19:5,15; 22:17; Psalm 83:14.
- (2) **Antithetic parallelism** involves the second line presenting a contrast to the thought of the first line.
- (a) For example, Psalm 20:8: “They are bowed down and fallen; But we are risen, and stand upright.”
 - (b) Compare also Psalm 1:6; Proverbs 10:1,5,12; 12:4; 14:30.
- (3) **Synthetic parallelism** is another type in which the second line adds something to the first line’s thought or completes it. It is called synthetic because a synthesis or coordination between the two elements takes place. It provides supplemental information or thought.
- (a) Consider Psalm 3:4, “I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill.”
Selah
 - (b) Compare also Psalms 2:6; 91:10; Job 23:10; Proverbs 26:4-5.
- b) Many modern scholars propose two additional forms of parallelism: climatic and emblematic.
- (1) Climatic parallelism involves phrases that move the reader toward an intended conclusion. Psalm 29:1-2 is a good example.
 - (2) Emblematic parallelism occurs when figurative language and the literal meaning are rendered in different lines. Psalm 1:3 includes this type of parallelism.

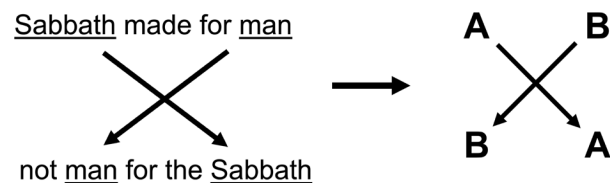
2. **Poetic devices.** The psalmists utilized a few different artistic and literary frameworks, or what is known as poetic devices, in their compositions. These are specific patterns used to organize the parallelisms. The most common devices used were chiasmus and acrostics.

a) **Chiasmus, or Chiastic Structure.** This is the most common pattern found among the Psalms. Chiasmus is a sequence of words, sentences, paragraphs, and even entire chapters that are repeated but in reverse order. It is sometimes called “Introverted parallelism.”

(1) The name of this poetic device is derived from the Greek letter *chi* (χ). It is a literary pattern where parallel lines simultaneously descend and ascend toward a central axis, which usually carries the main thought or emphasis desired by the psalmist. Sometimes, the central axis is a singular clause, or it can be a pair of lines. Thus, the psalm resembles an hourglass, or one-half of an “X” shape structure of parallel clauses.

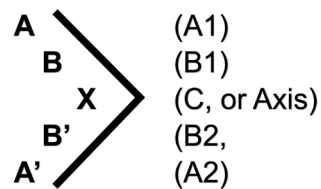
(2) For example, in Mark 2:27 Jesus stated, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”. The words “Sabbath” and “man” are repeated in the sentence but in reverse order. Such symmetry within the phrase makes Jesus’ point more memorable.

(a) Here is a graphic depiction of a simple chiasmus (notice the “x” shaped structure):



(b) **Identifying chiasmus within the Psalms is the key to unlocking the central idea, thought, precept, or lesson the psalmists intended to transmit to the reader.**

- (3) The most common format used to identify the parallel lines within a chiasm includes the initial line being indicated by a letter (**A**, for example) and its corresponding line being indicated by the same letter, but with an apostrophe or a number added (**A' or A1**). The process is repeated for each subsequent parallelism. For example, “The sabbath (**A**) was made for man (**B**), not man (**B'**) for the sabbath (**A'**).” The reversal of the AB order – to B'A – 'is what makes it a chiasmus. The pattern is ABB'A'. The center, or main turning point of the poetic structure is called the “Axis.” It is indicated by a subsequent letter, the word



“**Axis**,” or the letter “**X**.” From this point, each line is enumerated in reverse order.

- (4) Here is an example of a simple chiasmus directly from Psalm 51:1:

A = Have mercy upon me, O God,
B = According to Your lovingkindness;
B' = According to the multitude of Your
 tender mercies,
A' = Blot out my transgressions.

- (5) Another example of a chiastic structure that includes a single axis (and its indicators):

A = Yahweh establishes His servant (v.1)
B = He is sent to conquer (v.2)
 X (Axis) = Yahweh is his strength (v.3)
B1 = He is victorious (v.4)
A1 = Yahweh establishes His king (v.5)

- (6) Note the “>” structure of the lines descending and ascending toward a middle turning point [emphasized here by a staggered position].

- (7) Chiastic patterns within the Psalms vary from “Simple” (ABB'A'), to “Simple Pivot” (ABXB'A'), to “Complex

Chiasmus” (multiple chiasmus within a larger chiasmus).

b) Acrostic structure. This poetic device may be more familiar to Western readers, as our own poetry styles sometimes utilize this same structure.

(1) Lines of the psalm are arranged in the order of letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each line begins with a letter of the alphabet and subsequent lines begin with the next letter. Psalm 119 is a great example of an acrostic structure that uses all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. However, not all psalms that use an acrostic pattern use every letter of the alphabet in every case.

(2) One major limitation to fully appreciating the poetic structures of the Psalms is that they have been translated from Hebrew into English. This presents many challenges to understanding and identifying the original symmetry, wordplay, and structure to the uninformed reader. This becomes particularly apparent when an acrostic device is employed. This is one of the primary reasons this course requires the Background and Interpretation sections to be studied before proceeding with the exposition of the text.

3. For further study of Hebrew parallelism, see R. K. Harrison, “Old Testament Introduction.”

III. Classification, or Categories of the Different Types of Psalms.

A. While the Book of Psalms is indeed a collection of writings, each psalm is uniquely different. Those differences tend to fall into at least four major categories. Most Bible scholars generally recognize these four psalm types: Praise, Lament, Didactic, and Royal. However, no real consensus exists among theologians or various commentators as to the exact number of genres. The Psalms can easily be divided into far more categories depending on how one decides to classify them.

1. For our purposes in this course, we will focus on SIX Psalm types or categories. We will not study every psalm in every category. However, as we exposit the text, we will study several psalms in each of the six categories while attempting to give a detailed examination of the psalm type itself. This should equip the student with the necessary tools to exposit any of the psalms. A more

comprehensive “Classifications of the Psalm Types” is provided in the Appendix.

2. The six psalm categories we will be using are:
 - a) **Didactic & Wisdom Psalms** (10 Psalms). These are sometimes called “Precept psalms.” They are for teaching, providing guidelines for life, edification, or warnings. They often contrast the righteous against the wicked.
 - b) **Royal & Messianic Psalms** (28 Psalms). These are sometimes called “Throne psalms.” Many were composed during, or refer to the Davidic reign. They emphasize God’s eternal reign and sovereignty and include images of thrones, coronations, and royal processions. A large portion are prophetic references to the Christ.
 - c) **Psalms of Lament** (66 Psalms). These may also be considered “Complaint” psalms” because they typically include cries for help in times of distress. They are prayers asking for deliverance, or can be penitential – that is, express sorrow, human struggles, or remorse over sin.
 - d) **Imprecatory Psalms** (22 Psalms). “Imprecatory” means “spoken curses.” These are known as “Avenge psalms.” They ask for judgment, or vengeance, upon the wicked and one’s enemies.
 - e) **Praise & Thanksgiving Psalms** (31 Psalms). Often referred to as “Nature psalms.” They contain gratitude for what God has done for His people. They express joy, celebration, blessings, exalting God’s name, and glorifying Him.
 - f) **Pilgrimage Psalms** (32 Psalms). This is a specialty type of psalm also called “Ascent psalms.” They were sung among the people during a journey to the Temple in Jerusalem, recalling God’s goodness and provision.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT

PSALM 1 The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

Psalm 1 is generally directed toward man (rather than toward God) for purposes of edification. It is often called the “Door to the Psalms” because one needs to carefully go through it before he can fully appreciate what the other Psalms teach.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Didactic (Teaching) Psalm
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	

Psalm 1 is our first example of a “Didactic Psalm” in that it provides instruction that can be considered the “theme” to the entire Book of Psalms. As James E. Smith says in his commentary (p. 215), “It focuses on two fundamental doctrines of the Old Testament, (1) that the righteous ultimately prosper, and the wicked will finally face judgment; and (2) the ultimate victory for the righteous will occur with the coming Messiah.”

Psalm 1 is also our first example of a Hebrew poetry chiasmus. The structure presents a series of parallelisms that contrast the “blessed man” or righteous one (V1) with “the ungodly” (V5). He is sturdy “like a tree planted by the rivers of water” (V3a) as opposed to “the chaff which the wind drives away” (V4). His faith is then described in a series of lines about his actions: (V3b) he “brings forth its fruit” and (V3d) “whatever he does shall prosper.” The central axis, or emphasis of the godly man described in Psalm 1, is his “leaf also shall not wither” (V3c). This harmonizes perfectly with passages such as:

- The wise man who built his house upon the rock (Matthew 7:24-25).
- Being steadfast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- The encouraging words of our Lord of “remaining faithful until death,” (Revelation 2:10).

While studying the text of Psalm 1, consider the following graphic, which illustrates the chiasmic structure of the psalm along with some of its parallelisms emphasized by bold letters and underlines. The commentary of the text that follows uses the same letter structure, as presented here, to help identify the parallel elements.

[A] 1 **BLESSED IS THE MAN** Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

[B] 3a He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water,

[C] 3b That *brings forth its fruit in its season,*

[X] **3c Whose leaf also shall not wither;**

[C'] 3d And *whatever he does shall prosper.*

[B'] 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

[A'] 5 Therefore **THE UNGODLY** shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 1.

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] **1:1-2 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! 2 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.**

a) "How blessed is the man."

(1) The psalmist begins by introducing the first element of parallelism, the "blessed" man. The opposite, or parallel contrast figure is presented in an ending line of the psalm, "the ungodly," or sinner. The blessed man is the one who is godly, righteous, and approved by Yahweh. Let it be understood that the word "man" here is a word that can, on some occasions, indicate "a male, or husband," but in this context is referring to all of mankind, or "whosoever."

(2) The word Hebrew word for "blessed" is *ESHER (H835)* and occurs 26 times in the Psalms. (See Appendix: Study - "Who Are 'The Blessed' in the Psalms?") The first occurrence describes the person we are looking at here in verse one. The word does not mean "happy" as often mistakenly translated or used in our modern vernacular, because happiness depends on external circumstances. Biblical "blessed" describes a person who is approved of God and, because of that approval, has inner peace and contentment. This definition of the word "blessed" is the same meaning applied in the beatitudes of Matthew 5.

b) "Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked."

(1) In the Bible, the word "walk" is a description of how one lives, or one's lifestyle. "Counsel" is a word that means "advice." When the word "council" is used, it means advisors or an assembly for consultation and advice. The word, in its basic definition, is someone who is offering suggestions to

a person about how they should live. Therefore, the blessed man does not accept, live, or follow the advice or teaching of the counselors. It is not part of his lifestyle.

- (2) This is a good verse to use as an illustration when talking with young people because, in our modern society, they have many “counselors” that they turn to who may not have a Biblical foundation. For example, our youth have as counselors: their peers, the internet, television, popular celebrities, and many other forms of influence. Yet, the person who is approved of God chooses his counselors carefully. Why follow people who assume the position of counselors when they have no business being such? Why is it we use our peers to influence our behavior and lay down the standard of morality for us to embrace instead of God’s word? As Jesus said it is “the blind leading the blind” (Mt 15:14). You do not want someone like that to guide you. So, if one wants to be approved of God, he/she will not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Then whose counsel do we walk in? The next line of the psalm tells us.
- c) “He does not stand in the path of sinners.”
- (1) This seems to indicate that the blessed person is choosing very carefully where he will spend his time. Where the sinners are is not where he is or chooses to be. It is similar to what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, “flee every appearance of evil.” David also says in Psalm 17:4 “...I have kept from the paths of the violent.” That is what the blessed man does.
- d) “He does not sit in the seat of scoffers.”
- (1) Many translations use the word “scornful.” It is one who mocks or derides others.
- (2) The blessed one is not going to belittle the work of others. It is very easy to criticize others and the worldly love to point out one’s mistakes. Yet, to try it themselves is sometimes a completely different thing. Perhaps 1 Corinthians 15:33 is worthy to summarize this verse. He is one who chooses very carefully with whom he will be associated.
- e) “Delight in the law of the Lord.”
- (1) In contrast to deriding others, his delight is God’s word. “Delight” suggests finding a deep-rooted pleasure or contentment, a genuine source of satisfaction. This person finds ultimate fulfillment in the law of Yahweh.
- (2) Psalm 119 is a good commentary on this verse because the entire Psalm deals with God’s law. It is not the law of man, but the law of the Lord he delights in. Man’s laws are important, but God’s laws are eternal and are the ones that deserve the full attention of God’s people. One approved of God does this and finds delight in God’s law. The thought is similar to that of James 1:19. The blessed man comes to God’s word with a disposition to learn from it, not becoming angry or slow to listen to it.
- f) “In His law he meditates day and night.”
- (1) The person approved of God does not just give lip service to God’s word but thinks about it often and puts it into practice in his life.

[B] 1:3a And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,

- a) Up to this point, the psalmist has described what the blessed man does not do in the first line and, in the second, what he does do. Now in this third line, he describes what the blessed man is like as a result of what he does in verse 2. He is like a sturdy tree planted by a water source.
- b) "A tree firmly planted" is one that has a healthy root system. It reflects firm stability. Because of that the tree is not likely to be blown over by the storms of life.
- c) As long as a tree has steady access to the life-giving water, it remains strong. So, it is with the word of God. As long as a person continues to take in the wisdom found in the Bible, he will continually find strength from God's word.

[C] 1:3b which yields its fruit in its season,

- a) Those approved of the Lord are "fruit yielders." This is a poetic analogy for describing an individual's outward behavior. God has never, in any generation, expected His children to not have an impact on others. Just as the planted tree has the water source for making it fruitful, our constant exposure to and meditation on God's word is the source for making us more fruitful.
 - (1) It is God's word that teaches about the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22; cf. Matthew 7:18-20).
 - (2) Matthew 7:18, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."
 - (3) Mark 4:20, "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."
- b) "In its season" means one would expect fruit to appear at its appropriate time. It is a poetic description of what God's people do: as they grow spiritually from His word, they produce "fruit" at their appropriate time.

[X, or AXIS] 1:3c and its leaf does not wither;

- a) This is the central point, main axis, or the primary emphasis of the psalm, according to its chiasmic structure. When contrasting the righteous with the wicked, what is it about the godly that truly separates him from the ungodly? The answer is, "his leaf does not wither." Why does his leaf not wither and (by implication) the ungodly's leaf does? It is, again, because of its source of nutrition, "planted by the water." Thus, having leaves that never wither is a beautifully poetic way of describing what God's word does for His faithful people.
- b) A tree such as this is one that is healthy and free from infection and disease. To describe the "blessed of the Lord" in this way is to say that he is one who is spiritually strong and healthy. This is the exact same spiritual concept that Jesus utilized in His parable in John 15. He states, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, *bears much fruit*; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is *withered ...*" (*John 15:5-6*). Notice the similarity in words used? That is why this is the central concept of this composition. The psalmist is emphasizing the result and strength that the godly person receives from such "nutrition" (the living water, the Word of God). It is why he is so "blessed"!

[C'] 1:3d and in whatever does, he prospers.

- a) In the poetic structure of the psalm, this line is a synonymous parallelism with that which was mentioned earlier, “yields its fruit in its season.” The faithful, godly individual who is properly nourished by the word of God not only has leaves that do not wither but produces good works that may glorify the Father (Matthew 5:16). The conclusion is: “In whatever he does, he prospers.”
- b) As long as we seek first the kingdom of God, prosperity will be ours (Matthew 6:33). That is, ultimate prosperity (cf. James 1:25). This is not teaching that the godly man will never have any failures, or may experience poverty, but that the general course of his life will be successful.

[B'] 1:4 The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

- a) “The wicked are not so.”
 - (1) The penman now considers the wicked. In the chiastic structure of the psalm, the complete contrast to the “blessed man” (the one who is godly) is now presented. This is the antithetic parallelism form. Through inspiration, God chooses to use contrasts to capture our attention. A contrast is anything that is the opposite of something. The psalmists and prophets frequently used contrasts in words, phrases, people, actions, images, thoughts, events, and even places in their writings. Incorporating such contrasts helps to clearly communicate the overall meaning of the passage.
 - (2) The Hebrew word *RASHA* (*H7563*) for “wicked” appears 77 times in the Psalms. It presents a key concept in the Psalms because it describes a lifestyle that continually resists God's will.
 - (3) “So” emphasizes that the wicked do not have the four benefits that belong to the strong man of God, described in the previous lines of the psalm. The wicked are not like the godly.
- b) “They are like chaff which the wind drives away.”
 - (1) The wicked are like dried leaves with no substance. The wind comes and blows them away. This is the complete opposite of the one whose leaves don't wither. The Bible often talks about one's stability, as in having the character of genuine value. Wickedness is that which takes away one's true value. The wicked are a detriment to society because they have no value in and of themselves.

[A'] 1:5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

- a) What is the end result of the wicked one who is the opposite of the godly one? They will not fair well (“stand”) or receive any mercy on the Day of Judgment. They have no place among the people of God, those who do what is right in His eyes.
 - (1) Compare 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 6:15-17, and 20:11-15. There will be wicked present before the throne of God in the judgment. They just will not stand because they are not in a right relationship with God.

(2) God has a plan of bringing all the righteous together (cf. 2 Peter 3:13). This is another predominant word in the Psalms. The Hebrew word *TSEDEQ* (righteous) occurs 180 times.

1:6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

a) God's seeing and being aware of what man does is a common theme throughout the Bible. Here, it means that God gives favorable recognition to what the blessed man does and he will be rewarded accordingly in the judgment because God was satisfied with his life (cf. Nahum 1:7; 2 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 2:19).

(1) The wicked will not be able to continue because, ultimately, God will end their lifestyle and practices. Ultimately, they will be cast out of His presence and into eternal punishment.

This first Psalm is not filled with difficult theological concepts. It is simple, clear, and straightforward. It is a typical style for the didactic Psalms and simple chiasmus. It is also easy to see how this Psalm sets the stage for the entire book of Psalms.

PSALM 2

The Reign of the Lord's Anointed

The king mentioned in this psalm is subjected to the fiercest hostility of man but given the highest honor by God; it is clearly a reference to the Messiah, the Lord's anointed. Psalm 1 implores the reader to choose a life of obedience to God and His commandments. This psalm now encourages the nations to do the same.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Messianic & Royal Psalm
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Acts 4:24-28, 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, 5:5; Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15

Psalm 2 is attributed to David in Acts 4:25, which is one reason many scholars believe several more of the Psalms were written by David, although they may not be ascribed to him. In Acts 13:33, this is also said to be the “second” Psalm. This is a strong indication that some form of division of the Bible, especially in the Psalms, already existed in the collection of Scripture during the first century.

Psalm 2 is our first example of a “Messianic” or “Royal Psalm.” These types of psalms make many prophetic references to the Messiah, usually in a royal setting or pertaining to David. This psalm declares that God gave David’s descendants authority to rule. The New Testament also applies Psalm 2 to Jesus, as a descendant of David through Mary (Revelation 19:13-16). Since the Christ is going to sit on the throne of David, according to God’s promise as a type of king like David (2 Samuel 7:16), then it is natural for the king, David, to say many things about himself that will find a fuller meaning in the work and person of Jesus.

Messianic and royal psalms make up almost one-fifth of the Book of Psalms. The Hebrew word for “Messiah” is *MASHIACH* (*H4899*), meaning “anointed one” (“Christ” means the same in the New Testament). It is used and often translated as “anointed” in Psalms 2:2, 18:50, 20:6, 84:8-9, 89:38, 89:51, 105:15, 132:10, and 132:17. However, several Messianic psalms simply allude the Messiah through imagery, such as the cross and fulfilled prophecy in Psalm 22, or the “Good Shepherd” of Psalm 23. It is through these many descriptions, prophecies, as well as types and shadows that the ancients drew from to help them identify the Lord’s anointed One. Jesus confirmed this in Luke 24:44 about “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” For more information on this classification, see “Psalms Classification Study: Messianic Psalms” in the Appendix.

While studying the text of Psalm 2, consider the following graphic, which illustrates the chiasmic structure of the psalm along with some of its parallelisms emphasized by bold letters and underlines. The exposition of the text that follows uses the same letter structure as presented here to help identify the various parallel elements.

- [A] 1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?
- [B] 2 **THE KINGS OF THE EARTH SET THEMSELVES**, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."
- [C] 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:
- [D] 6 "Yet *I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.*"
- [X] 7 "***I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.***"
- [D'] 8 Ask of Me, and *I will give You The nations for Your inheritance*, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
- [C'] 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "
- [B'] 10 Now therefore, be wise, **O KINGS; BE INSTRUCTED**, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 12a Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little.
- [A'] 12b Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 2
 (For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

- [A] **2:1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?**
- a) The chiastic structure of this psalm emphasizes national authority. It was nations that rebelled against God at the Tower of Babel. Centuries later, Israel submitted to a king in defiance of God's will. The kings of the earth, unaware of the true source of their authority (cf. Romans 13:1-7), have and will continue to rage against the Supreme Authority to whom they must submit. Consequently, kings also continue to exploit their subjects' wealth while indulging in lives of extravagance. They ignore God's laws and establish human laws to protect wrongdoers while punishing the righteous. But the psalmist warns, "Take wisdom and instruction: repent and serve Yahweh with fear and trembling today, so you may avoid being crushed with a rod of iron tomorrow!"

b) This Psalm begins by challenging any authority who questions God's plan or word. If they devise something contrary to God's plan, it will fail. The contrast (antithetic parallelism) is presented in the last line of the psalm (verse 12c - refer to the Chiastic Structure graphic of Psalm 2).

(1) The more famous rendering is "Why do the heathens rage?" (KJV) It carries the idea that the Gentile nations are in a fit of rage against God, standing against the will of God.

(2) In a mocking question, the psalmist asks, "Why is everyone getting so excited in planning to oppose God? That is foolishness!" The last line of verse 12 presents the contrast to this.

[B] 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. 2:3 "Let us tear their fetters apart, And cast away their cords from us."

a) "the rulers take counsel together"

(1) The kings and the rulers come together to confer on how they might overthrow the rule of the Lord. This is how it is applied in Acts 4:24-28. The rulers are being accused of trying to overthrow that which is a plan of God, and it may have very well been this reasoning that it struck home with Gamaliel in Acts 5:33-42. He said, "If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it."

(2) In Revelation 19 the beast and kings of the earth are depicted as assembled to make war against Him on the white horse, the anointed one, the Lamb. But they will not be successful. Thus, the theme is repeated throughout Scripture, entire nations can be in a rage against God, but it will not accomplish anything. Man cannot stand against God and win. Neither are men intelligent enough to counsel together and devise a plan to defeat God and His anointed (that is, the king whom the Lord will select), whether the nations approve of Him or not.

b) "cast away their cords"

(1) Essentially, the rulers are saying, "We do not want the dominance and control from the Lord anymore." In their arrogance, they think they can choose to resist the Lord's will. As we see in the next verse, such foolishness causes God to laugh.

(2) The chiastic contrast to these verses is presented by the psalmist in verses 10-12.

[C] 2:4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 2:5 Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury.

a) "He who sits in the heavens laughs"

(1) This personifies God in human terms. It describes God's knowledge of just how ridiculous it is to challenge Him. He finds it humorous that puny little men, who are so full of themselves, think they could challenge God in any way.

(2) In Revelation 20, Satan assembles a huge army to fight against the Lord and His people. Satan foolishly thinks he can win. Yet God so easily and simply does away with Satan and his followers. The lesson here, and

Revelation, is that no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth is capable of standing against the Almighty.

- b) "Then He will speak to them in His anger" ("wrath" - ASV, ESV, NKJV)
 - (1) When God deals with those who oppose Him, it is through His anger and fury. The part that has provoked God to act is the arrogance of the rulers. What causes God to laugh is the foolishness of His own creation trying to oppose Him. The part that is not funny is the coming judgment. It is not a laughing matter to fall into the hands of the angry God! (Hebrews 10:31)
 - (2) God's "wrath" must be understood in the proper terms. According to John 4:8,16, God is love. He also desires that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9). So, is God always good and loving, or is he some moody authoritarian who acts capriciously and loses His temper at times?
 - (a) God's "wrath" comes through His love as a just judge. Because He is loving, He must maintain and render justice to those who disobey His commands. Therefore, to the one who committed the trespass and is receiving judgment from Him, it is seen and felt as God being wrathful, or furious. But, God's pure character of love is still fully intact. It would be unloving to not impute the wicked!
 - (b) In verse 9, we will see a synonymous parallelism that the psalmist uses to describe what God's wrath will look like when He finally does execute it.

[D] 2:6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."

- a) "I have installed"
 - (1) In verses 1-5, we see how men are busy making their own divisive plans and schemes, but God is always in ultimate control, and He will do what is in accordance with His plan, which is now presented here in this verse. It is He who will set things in order.
 - (2) It is not who the people want to be king that is important, but who God wants. Here, the psalmist transitions from narration to the voice of the One with the true power speaking. God declares that He has already chosen someone and has installed His choice. He will be the One who will reign, and it will be from Zion. Zion is a reference to Jerusalem, which is where the Lord's kingdom would be established in the Christian Age (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).
 - (3) The prophecy indicates that this king will be a Davidic-like king, which is a key element in Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah (cf. 2 Sam 7:12-16; Psa 89:3-4; Isa 11:1, etc.).

[Axis] 2:7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

- a) According to its chiasmic structure, this is the central point, main axis, or primary emphasis of the psalm. The emphasis is placed upon the One whom God has chosen. In the Hebrew poetic form of the verses, it is like an arrow pointing directly at Messianic prophecy. It is written in verbiage that indicates it has already been completed, emphasizing its assuredness.

- b) In verse six, God spoke. In verse 7, the Son speaks. In verse 8, God speaks once again. Who is at the center of God's voice (His Word)? It is the Son - the "logos" (Greek for word)!
- c) "The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son,' "
- (1) The word "Son" is a Messianic title (cf. Isaiah 42:1). This verse provides evidence for Jesus' divinity: "You are My Son." The fact that He is begotten of God is proof of the resurrection.
 - (2) This passage is quoted directly three times in the New Testament.
 - Hebrews 1:5 applies it to the deity of Christ;
 - Hebrews 5:5 applies it to the priesthood of Jesus; and
 - Acts 13:33 as proof of the resurrection of Jesus.
 - (3) The connection with the baptism is also important to understanding the Messiahship of Jesus. This Psalm tells us that when God installs His king, He proclaims that He is His beloved Son. It was at Jesus' baptism that this declaration was made. So when Jesus was baptized, God anointed Him as the Messiah. The anointing was done with the Holy Spirit who descended upon Him. However, Jesus did not actually assume His position as king until after the resurrection, for it was after that great event Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18).
 - (4) The timing is not unusual because God's prophet Elijah anointed both Saul and David, but they did not immediately assume their positions as kings after the anointing. Some time passed before either took the throne. The same is seen with Jesus' anointing.

[D'] 2:8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

- a) "I will give"
- (1) This is God speaking again. It is what He said to the Christ. He (God) was promising to give all authority to Jesus, and give the entire creation to Him as His inheritance. With this in mind, it makes the Satan's offer in the temptation considerably weaker (Matthew 4:8,9). Why accept Satan's offer when God, who truly owns everything, has promised the very ends of the earth to you? Equally, Christians should look at the temptations of Satan the same way. Why should we yield to Satan and accept his meager offers when our God, who owns everything, has promised to give us such a great inheritance (1 Peter 1:4)?
 - (2) This line is a synonymous parallelism to verse 6. Who is it that truly has the power to give or take away authority? It is the Almighty God (Romans 13). In both lines, God states "I" have or will. It is His plan, His will, that will be done. If He has the power to set His King on the throne in Jerusalem ("holy hill of Zion") then He also has the power to give nations as an inheritance.
 - (3) This thought harmonizes beautifully with Isaiah 2:2, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it."

[C'] 2:9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

- a) Here, we see a synonymous parallelism to verses 4-5 of what God's wrath will look like when He finally executes it. Once an earthen vessel is dashed into pieces, it is impossible to reassemble it back to its former shape and beauty. Likewise, the arrogant kings will be broken, and His judgment will feel like an iron rod, which does not bend but is extremely destructive.
- b) "A rod of iron" refers to hard and strict discipline. This terminology appears three times in Revelation (cf. 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15).
 - (1) Premillennialists use this verse to say that Christians will rule with a rod of iron. However, our ruling will be through Christ. That ruling will be with the rod of iron that is in the hand of Christ. Earthenware has to do with their ultimate defeat and overthrow because it is easily broken apart when struck by something like a rod of iron.

[B'] 2:10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 2:12a Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little.

- a) In view of God's supremacy, and the foolishness of their devising a vain thing against God, the nations are offered their only hope - submission.
- b) In the chiasmic structure of the psalm, this is the antithetical parallelism to verses 2-3. Instead, of "setting themselves and taking counsel against God," they need to surrender their arrogance and bow in reverent worship to the Lord! This is the true meaning of "fearing God" (cf. Ecc 12:13).
 - (1) Note also the Hebrew parallelism within this line: trembling and reverence (fear) mean the same thing. Therefore, the simplistic idea of just a "healthy respect for God" is not strong enough! There needs to be trembling—a healthy shuddering before God's awesome power.
 - (2) The word "worship" is the Hebrew word "to serve" (H5647), thereby encouraging all nations to serve the only true God. The nations are encouraged to come to the Lord and bow down to His authority rather than provoke His anger with their own pride and arrogance.
- c) "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry" (ASV, KJV, NKJV) "Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry" (NASB)
 - (1) This is in addition to the above. Jesus Himself said, "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23). The same idea is present in this verse. You cannot honor the Father without "doing homage" to the Son. He is going to have a rod of iron, and you are required by the Father to honor Him and yield to His authority.
 - (2) There is some difficulty in translating this phrase. Some translations have left out the phrase "the Son," and replaced the word with the idea of sincerity or purity. Thus, the idea would be to "worship sincerely" or "pay true homage." Since the son was the subject earlier, it does not change the sense here. The Son is still to be worshiped (cf. Heb 1:5-6).
- d) "And you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled"

(1) There is a limit to how much rejection the Son will tolerate. He will eventually come to judge the earth (2 Cor 5:10). While Jesus displayed perfect patience, his patience will eventually reach its logical limit. He cannot tolerate continued disobedience. So when He does act and His wrath is kindled, all those who receive His wrath will perish.

[A'] 2:12b Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

a) "All who take refuge." (ASV, ESV, NASB)

(1) "All" implies that it is open to anyone and everyone. They will be approved if they take refuge in the Son. Some might refuse to pay homage to the Son, seeking refuge in some temporary shelter. Yet eventually, God's stored-up wrath will be released (cf. Rom 2:6).

b) In its beautifully poetic form, this line is the natural, antithetical Hebrew parallelism (contrast) to verse 1. It is the complete opposite of the mocking question presented at the beginning of this psalm: "Why is everyone foolishly getting so excited in planning to oppose God?" Once one realizes just how foolish it is because of God's sovereignty and His placing His Son on the throne, it is far better to "put one's trust in Him."

c) It is part of the "good news," just as Paul applied it in his message delivered to the attendees of the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. ... Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:32-39)

d) In summary, "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him!"

PSALM 3

Save Me, O My God!

The dominant theme of this psalm is how the righteous individual can confidently face problems in life (James Smith, p. 217). It is a prayer of one crying out to Yahweh for deliverance and protection from one's enemies. This psalm and the next five form a bridge between Psalm 2, about the Son, to Psalm 8, the great Messianic psalm. The grouping is prophetic, presenting rebellion against and rejection of the anointed King.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Psalm of Lament (Individual)
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	2 Samuel 15-18

Psalm 3 is the first psalm with a title: “A Psalm of David When he fled from Absalom his son.” One commentator pointed out that since titles for the Psalms are found in the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible, then “They are to be taken with absolute seriousness throughout.” This title is one of 14 that are related to historical events in David's life. The physical events of this psalm are recorded in 2 Samuel 15-18, but the heart is recorded here in poetic form. The scene involves Absalom being allowed to come back to Jerusalem by David after Joab talked him into it. However, Absalom wanted power for himself, and as he secured power, he forced his father, David, to leave Jerusalem. This psalm reflects how David feels and what he is thinking. It is his prayer stated in his anxiety, as the text in 2 Samuel describes Absalom with many followers, showing that the threat was real.

Psalm 3 is our first example of a “Psalm of Lament.” These types of psalms are written as complaints or cries to Yahweh for help in times of distress, including prayers for deliverance. Sometimes, they are penitential, meaning they express sorrow, human struggle, or remorse for sin. Psalms of Lament can be written in the form of a national, or individual lament. In national laments, the psalmist often pleads with God on behalf of the community, to remove affliction, threats, or some calamity that has come upon the people. It can also be in the form of mourning for why God had forsaken His people. They contain expressions of trust in God's power, justice, and deliverance. Psalms of individual lament are typically more personal where the psalmist beseeches God to intervene on his behalf in the case of some great trouble, persecution, or need for rescue. In addition, both types can express sorrow or guilt for trespasses committed against Yahweh. Psalms of Lament are the most common of the Book of Psalms and are the largest category, containing sixty-six. For further study on Psalms of Lament, see “Psalms Classification Study: Psalms of Lament” in the Appendix.

Psalm 3 is also an example of how classifications can vary depending on one's viewpoint or how multiple categories can be applied to the same psalm. For example, this psalm has been categorized by some as a “trust” psalm and also as a “prayer” psalm. Each of those classifications is a correct description of the psalm. Thus, it is simply a preference as to how many, or what categories might be most beneficial for

one's study. For the purposes of this course, we have simplified the classifications to six. However, several psalms will fall into more than one type, which requires an analysis to determine which category is most evident in the psalm.

The chiasmic structure of Psalm 3 has three pairings of lines. Each pairing points to a central axis or main emphasis: the result of a prayer. While there are some variances among commentators in how the chiasmus should be interpreted, the parallelisms are not difficult to identify. The psalm opens with "many" saying to David, "There is no help from God" (V1-2), which is contrasted with "Salvation belongs to the Lord (V8). Thus, it is a blessing to him. The second pair describes God Who "shields" and "lifts up" David's head (V3), yet strikes his "enemies on the cheekbone" (V7b). The third parallelism is seen in David crying out to Yahweh, Who "heard" him (V4) with God then "arising" to save him (V7a). The three pairs center around the protection that God provides which allows David to rest in peace and without fear.

While studying the text of Psalm 3, consider the following graphic, which illustrates the chiasmic structure of the psalm along with some of its parallelisms emphasized by bold letters and underlines. The exposition of the text that follows uses the same letter structure as presented here to help identify the various parallel elements.

- [A] 1 LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. 2 Many are they who say of me, "**THERE IS NO HELP FOR HIM IN GOD.**" Selah
- [B] 3 But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
- [C] 4 I cried to the LORD with my voice, And *He heard me* from His holy hill. Selah
- [X] **5 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around.**
- [C'] 7a Arise, O LORD; *Save me, O my God!*
- [B'] 7b For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.
- [A'] 8 **SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD.** Your blessing is upon Your people.

Selah Graphic: Chiasmic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 3

- [A] **3:1 A Psalm of David When He Fled from Absalom His Son. LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against**

**me. 3:2 Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God."
Selah.**

- a) "O Lord, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me."
- (1) David speaks from the perspective of a king. His adversaries are evil men. The Psalms provide a unique glimpse into the thinking and life of a godly man, more than any other Biblical character. We know more about David than anyone else in the Bible because of 1 and 2 Samuel and the first part of Kings, which record the events of David's life. But, we have the Psalms to tell us what David is thinking and feeling. We do not have the same benefit concerning other Biblical characters. Such insight into David's life helps the reader to relate to the problems David is having.
 - (2) David's adversaries are God's adversaries. Since David was determined to stand up for the truth, he had many who rose up against him (cf. 2 Sam 15:12). How true it is in the Scripture that when one stands for the truth, he suddenly feels alone (cf. Elijah), as if one has "No help for him in God."
- b) "There is no help for him in God."
- (1) David's situation was so bad that many felt he was beyond God's help. Those who said this probably didn't feel that God was unable to help David; they probably felt that God was unwilling to help him. They looked at David's past sin and supposed, "This is all that he deserves from God. There is no help for him in God."
 - (2) This same thought is seen in Job and elsewhere - does God want to jeopardize His reputation by not coming to the defense of those who trust in Him? David has given himself to God while others are saying God will not deliver him. "Do you want to be like that God? Will you abandon those who belong to you?" David did not want people to believe God had left him.
 - (a) Shimei was an example of someone who said that God was against David and he was just getting what he deserved (2 Samuel 16:8).
 - (b) This thought was perhaps the most painful of all for David—the thought that God might be against him and that he could not find help in God.
- c) These first two verses introduce the first pair of parallel lines: a proclamation by some that God provides no help contrasted with the last line of the psalm, which states that God does, indeed, provide salvation. Yahweh is always there to help and rescue His faithful followers.
- d) "SELAH."
- (1) Here is our first example of the many technical terms utilized throughout the Psalms. For a comprehensive list of the "Important Technical Terms of the Psalms," see the Appendix.
 - (2) "Selah" (found 71x in Psalms) means "to pause, or an interlude." It carries a secondary meaning of "to lift up." It's believed that the term may have been used for musical direction or chanting. The implication from the

instruction is that the reader should stop, pause, and meditate on what has been read and then lift up one's heart in praise and prayer to Yahweh.

[B] 3:3 But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

a) "You, O LORD, are a shield"

(1) David knew the LORD (Yahweh) was his shield. Thus, he expresses his confidence in the Lord.

(2) Here is a military man using a Hebrew military word, "shield" *MAGEN, MEGINNAH (H4043)*. It implies defense and protection. How many times in the heat of battle did David carry a shield? Perhaps he remembers the time when the enemy sword was deflected off of his shield. Maybe he remembers the arrows that have glanced off it. David is one who truly understands the benefit of the shield. The figure of God being a shield and protector is an important concept found throughout the Psalms (cf. Psa 3:3; 18:35; 28:7; 33:20; 35:2; 47:9; 59:11; 76:3; 84:9,11; 115:9,10,11; 119:114; 144:2).

b) "My glory and the One who lifts up my head."

(1) In the context of 2 Samuel 15-18, this psalm reflects David's heart while he was fleeing for his life. His confidence was waning, but God would lift his countenance (i.e., he would be vindicated). David is not about to lose his confidence in God! This is a great example of faith in action. People find glory in all sorts of things - fame, power, prestige, or possessions. David found his glory in the LORD.

(2) The imagery is drawn from one under attack by the enemy. David needed a shield, but he wasn't asking God to fulfill this, instead, this is a strong declaration of fact, "You, O Lord, are a shield for me."

c) In the Hebrew poetic chiasmus, this line, which describes God as One Who "shields" and "lifts up" David's head, has its antithetic parallel in the second clause of verse 7. God strikes David's "enemies on the cheekbone" and breaks the teeth of the ungodly. That is the opposite of protecting one's head in the heat of a conflict. Thus, David is defended while his enemies are destroyed.

[C] 3:4 I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah

a) "I cried to the LORD with my voice"

(1) David's cry shows the pain he is experiencing. Yet, his crying to the Lord was justified because the Lord answered David from His holy mountain.

(2) This is a beautiful picture of prayer. It is why this psalm is classified as a *psalm of lament*.

b) "He heard me from His holy hill"

(1) How marvelous is it that the Creator of the universe, God Almighty, hears His faithful children? While others mocked David saying God wanted nothing to do with him, he knew that, "He heard me!" Any child must be thankful that their Father hears them when they cry.

(a) Another example is found in Isaiah being told to "Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I

have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” (Isaiah 38:4-5)

- (2) “His holy hill” is a reference to Mt. Zion, the place where the Ark of the Covenant resided (cf. 2 Samuel 6:2). Today man finds comfort from God’s answers in His word (cf. James 1:5).
 - (3) In the historical account, Absalom had taken over Jerusalem and forced David out off the throne. But here, we have insight into David’s thoughts. He knew that it wasn’t Absalom sitting on the throne on God’s holy hill. The LORD Himself still held that ground and would hear and help David from His holy hill.
- c) Verse 4 forms the third pair of Hebrew parallelisms. The declaration that Yahweh had heard David is confirmed in the first clause of verse 7: God would “arise and save him.”
 - d) The instruction of “Selah” is inserted at the end of these two lines (verses 3-4). One should stop now and reflect on what has just been said, the truth of God’s power and protection. Such reflection helps emphasize the next lines, the central point of the psalm.

[Axis] 3:5 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. 3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around.

- a) “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustains me.”
 - (1) Here, in these two verses, we have the central focus, or axis, of the psalm’s chiasmic structure — peaceful rest. Such rest is only possible with God’s protection, the very point that David illustrates throughout the composition.
 - (2) One who is weak in faith lies down without confidence he will survive the night. David was one who was able to steal Saul’s spear while he was sleeping and could have killed him. David is keenly aware that the same thing could happen to him. Did that cause him to lose sleep? Not in the least, because his confidence in God was vindicated. Who knows what God did through the night to preserve the life of David?
 - (a) Sleep was a blessing. David was under such intense pressure from the circumstances of Absalom’s rebellion that sleep might have been extremely difficult, but instead, he slept, and he awoke, vindicating his faith in God.
 - (b) Knowing God loves us gives us the same peace of mind (cf. Philippians 4:6; John 14:27). Waking was yet another blessing because many wondered if David would live to see a new day. David viewed both of these as evidence of God’s great blessing.
 - (c) How often do we take peaceful sleep for granted? We should thank God, Who sustains us even in our sleep. Even in simple things, like while we sleep unconsciously, we continue to breathe, our heart keeps pumping, and our organs operate. Thus, the same God who sustains us in our sleep can sustain us in our difficulties.
- b) “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people”

(1) David has said God was a shield about him and his enemies have made a circle about him. Thus, he is encircled twice. The most important encircling is God (his shield). Therefore, he is not afraid no matter how many enemies are about. Fear often paralyzes one from doing what he should (cf. John 19:38). David will proceed without allowing fear to paralyze him.

(a) The “ten thousands of people” may be a poetic exaggeration, but it is conceivable that David is facing a large army assembled by Absalom. The righteous always have many enemies (John 7:7; 15:18-20; 1 John 3:13).

(b) While this psalm was written long before Paul lived, perhaps the apostle reflected upon David’s words when he wrote, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

c) This psalm has often been referred to as a “morning psalm,” cry, or prayer because of the faith and confidence expressed in how the Lord provided peace and security through the night. When one awakes from sleep, they immediately give glory to God for sustaining and protecting them during that vulnerable time. Consider this psalm when reading about Jesus, while He slept in the midst of a storm (Matthew 8:24).

[C’] 3:7a Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! ...

a) “Arise, O Lord”

(1) These words reflect the events of Numbers 10:35, where Moses used the same phrase as the children of Israel broke camp in the wilderness and the ark went forward. It was a military phrase, calling on God to go before them to both defend Israel and lead them to victory.

b) David’s deliverance begins with God. It is the answer to his prayer (verse 4). Thus, this line serves as a parallel to David’s thoughts from his vocal cry to God. What was he crying out for? That God would be moved to help, rescue, or preserve him in this desperate time of trouble.

(1) The word “save” in Hebrew is *YASHA* (H3467). It is a verb, meaning “to save,” in comparison to the noun form found in verse 8, *YESHUA* (H3444), meaning “savior.”

[B’] 3:7b For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

a) “You have struck ... You have broken ...”

(1) By writing this in the past tense, David may be recalling past events in which God delivered him. He could also be so confident that God will destroy these present enemies that he speaks as if it has already taken place. Such verbiage is common among prophetic oracles of God, he often speaks of future events in the past tense to emphasize the assuredness of His Word.

(2) Perhaps David is reflecting on what he has personally seen (and may have done himself) in battle - shattering teeth upon the impact of a club. David is expressing that there are those who are opposing him, and thus, God is smiting them with His Powerful Hand. David uses this same

metaphor in Psalm 58:6 to describe the total domination and defeat of the enemy.

- (3) David's mind was both on what he trusted God to do (Save me, O my God) and on what God had done (struck all my enemies . . . broken the teeth of the ungodly). David was looking for protection, but more so, he expected victory. Knowing what God had done gave David confidence in what the LORD would do! In faith, he looked beyond the threat to victory, knowing it would happen with God's blessing.

**[A'] 3:8 Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people.
Selah**

- a) "Salvation belongs to the LORD"
 - (1) "Save" is a keyword 46 times in the Psalms. It sometimes does not refer to salvation from sin, although some texts do. Usually, it refers to salvation from the present crisis.
 - (2) The Hebrew word here for "salvation" is *YESHUA* (H3444) meaning "something saved, that is, (abstractly) deliverance." It is translated into English as "Joshua." When translated from Greek to English in the New Testament, the word underwent a few transitions and eventually became "Jesus." One great example of the word is found in Exodus 15:2, "The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation [yeshua]," and also, "He only is my rock and my salvation [yeshua], My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken." (Psalm 62:2)
 - (3) In any implication of the word, David understood that salvation was God's work. He is the source of true deliverance. It isn't found in any nation or human army. To be saved, that is, rescued from trouble, one must appeal to the LORD God, Yahweh Himself.
- b) "Your blessing is upon Your people"
 - (1) What a beautiful insight into David's heart! Even in a time of intense calamity, he wasn't primarily concerned only for himself but for all of God's people. His prayer for salvation and ultimate victory over the conflict with Absalom was not just for his own best interest but, instead, for what would be in the best interest of God's chosen people, His holy nation. David truly was Israel's sweet shepherd - a servant leader.
- c) This last clause closes out the chiasmus form of the poem with reverence to God. There may be trouble that comes our way and enemies to accompany the conflict (verse 1), but ultimately, the people whom God blesses will pass through the dark valley and be victorious!

PSALM 4

An Evening Prayer of Trusting in God

The fourth psalm is a request to God for deliverance from distress. David pours out his complaint against his slanderous enemies and finds peace and refuge in God. It teaches us that sinners' victories are only temporary and meaningless; only repentance can bring true happiness.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Psalm of Lament (Individual)
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Ephesians 4:26

Psalm 4 is our first example of a psalm with musical instruction. This Psalm has the superscription of, "To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of David." David was a musician. (cf. 1 Samuel 16:23; 1 Chronicles 13:8). He often danced and played "before the Lord" (2 Samuel 6:14-15). When the temple was completed by his son, Solomon, he "brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated," which included "harps and stringed instruments for singers" he had made. Before this point in time, no musical instruments were mentioned in God's instructions for the Tabernacle. But in 1 Kings 8-10 we find them incorporated into the worship of Yahweh. This psalm reflects the influence of David.

We should point out that the use of instruments of music by the Hebrews, who were worshipping under the Old Covenant, constitutes no authority whatsoever for Christians to use of them in the worship of God, under the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24). Regarding the inscription, Matthew Henry observed that in the Old Testament, "All of the singing was done by the choristers, not by the people [general population]; but the New Testament appoints all Christians to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)."

In addition to the superscription already included in the psalm, it is often given the title of "An Evening Prayer" or something similar in our modern translations. This is derived from verse 4, "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still." Thus, within Catholicism, Psalm 4 forms part of the Benedictine (an order of monks) rite of the daily evening prayer "Compline" (end of the day). Yet, in the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer, this psalm is to be read on the morning of the first day of the month.

Psalm 4 is another example of a "Psalm of Lament." This psalm is an individual lament. David was distressed by men who were shaming him for praising the Lord. This psalm is his response to their unjust mockery. He laments his anger toward them but resolves to sin against no one, including God. Instead, he will be still, meditate in his heart, trust in the Lord, and continue to do righteousness according to God's word. Thus, this psalm is also considered to be a "trust psalm" genre. However, because of the prevailing sentiment of anguish expressed throughout the writing, we have classified it as a "Psalm of Lament."

Psalm 4 chiastic structure. Various scholars have recommended a few different summary expositions of the chiastic structure of this psalm, which illustrates the variances Hebrew to English interpretations can have. While the original penman composed the psalm in a traditional Hebrew poetry chiasmus format, determining what he intended or identifying the exact arrangement of the parallelisms can prove to be difficult for modern readers. Some compositions are quite easy to dissect, but in general, outlining the chiasmus of a psalm is a rather subjective process. Here are a couple of examples that have been suggested for Psalm 4:

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary (Example A):

[A] 1-2 Prayer

[B] 3-6 Exhortation

[A'] 7-8 Prayer

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary (Example B):

[A] 1 A Prayer: Oh righteous God, Who makes things right, Rescue me!

[B] 2 Enemies: ignore the ungodly slanderers

[C] 3a God has sanctified His servant

[X] 3b ***“The LORD hears when I call to Him.”***

[C'] 4-5 Sanctify yourselves in silence and sacrifice

[B'] 6 Enemies: Ignore the ungodly cynics

[A'] 7-8 Result of Prayer: There is joy and peace in trusting God

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

In the exposition of the text that follows, we will utilize the same letter structure as Example B, presented here, to help identify the parallel elements of the composition.

[A] **4:1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.**

a) “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!”

(1) David is talking directly to God. There is passion in his voice. This is a prayer! He is pleading for God’s attention to his present problem. This is a

great example of how prayer to our Almighty God should be: with passion and deep care within the heart.

- (2) The first line of this Psalm concerns “now.” We can imagine David saying, “Right now, God, answer me!” What David does here is interesting. The footnote says something to the effect, “Who maintains my right.” The point is that he is appealing to God’s character as an upholder of justice and that which is right. He then follows that statement with an appeal to God as one who protects His own.
- b) “Thou has relieved me in my distress. ... hear my prayer. ”
 - (1) The second clause of verse 1 appeals to the past. The third returns us to the now and the future. When David says “You have relieved me,” it is literally “made room for me.” The word means “give me some space” and has the idea of being in a tight corner and the need to get out of the tight space. David has worked himself into a corner. He is in distress and does not have many options left as to where to go and what to do.
 - (2) David appeals to the past when God helped him as grounds for future help, “God, you’ve helped me before, please help me again.”
 - (3) “Have mercy and hear” is the correct posture when addressing Yahweh, the Creator of all things (Revelation 4:11). He is not obligated to listen to His creation; we are subordinate to Him! He sits on the throne (Hebrews 4:16; Revelation 4), and we are His servants. As we make our petitions to Him, asking for mercy and to hear our prayers demonstrates humble reverence toward His sovereignty.
- c) Verse one of a psalm almost always serves as the opening line of a chiasmic pair. Verses 7 and 8 form a natural parallel to what is said in the first verse. The psalmist asked God for relief from distress and mercy. In the last two verses, he declared that the Lord had provided “gladness in his heart” and peaceful rest - both indicate he had received the relief he was asking for.

[B] 4:2 How long, O you sons of men, Will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness And seek falsehood? Selah

- a) “How long ... turn my glory to shame? ... love worthlessness ... seek falsehood?”
 - (1) What do you think David would be referring to? Considering the context of who is speaking, David, we can deduce several things to help us understand what is written here.
 - (a) The honor God has bestowed upon David is a kingdom and being the Lord’s anointed. It should be an honor to be God’s anointed king, but it has become a reproach. So, David is appealing to the people’s common sense. It does not make sense that they would attack someone who is trying to serve God. He believes the people’s problem is a problem of priorities. They love that which has no value.
 - (b) Thus, David asks a valid question: “How long?” Perhaps one could connect Psalm 3 with Psalm 4 in relation to the stress of Absalom’s rebellion. The two psalms seem very similar. However, in this

psalm, David seems to be more concerned about his reputation than his physical safety or the kingdom.

(c) We should be reminded that Jesus would later experience the same thing David expresses here. Wicked men tried to turn almost every righteous thing Jesus did into shame. It's a heart problem that has been repeated over and over again, as the Apostle Paul pointed out of those, "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." (Romans 1:25)

b) Verse 2 introduces the second chiasmic pairing of the psalm - David's enemies. By pointing out their mocking of him, David asks God to ignore the ungodly slanderers. The synonymous parallel is identified in verse 6, where, again, David's enemies ask questions in a contemptuous tone.

c) "Selah"

(1) Stop for a moment and reflect and what has been said. (See "Important Technical Terms in the Psalms" in the Appendix for more information).

[C] 4:3a But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly;

a) "The LORD has set apart"

(1) The words "set apart" are one word in Hebrew, *PALAH* (H6395). It means "to be distinct, marked out, be separated, be distinguished" (Brown-Driver-Briggs). Moses used the word to distinguish God's people from the rest of the world in Exodus 33:16, "We shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."

(a) The Old Testament uses several other words to describe that which is to be "set apart" for God's purposes, such as "sanctified, consecrated, and holy." All three are found in Exodus 29:33, "They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to **consecrate** [*MALA - H4390*] and to **sanctify** [*QADASH - H6942*] them; but an outsider shall not eat them, because they are **holy** [*QODESH - H6944*].

(b) In every case, the emphasis is on designating exclusivity for something or someone for special use and not for general use. We understand this concept in our daily lives. We often set certain things apart to serve some special purpose.

(c) David knew that he and other godly people were set apart for God.

(2) David says: "You need to be convinced and know for yourselves that it is the Godly man whom the Lord reserves to be His." This is the third pair in the chiasmus. In this verse, David expresses that it is God Who has sanctified His servant. In verses 4-5, he instructs the reader to sanctify themselves in silence and sacrifice.

[X] 4:3b The LORD will hear when I call to Him.

a) In this clause, we have the central axis or main emphasis of the composition. It is rather fitting, considering even at the center of trouble or conflict, one can still find solace in prayer to the Lord. (Cf. Philippians 4:7). This has always been David's greatest comfort, that God hears him when he cries out. Not that God always answered the way he wished, just as He will not always

answer ours in the way we may want. But the comfort that God hears is something we can relate to.

- b) Every child of God should possess the kind of assurance in their faith as David. Faithful Christians can be confident that God hears their prayers! If perhaps you feel that your prayers are ineffective, it may be worthwhile to conduct a spiritual inventory (2 Corinthians 13:5) of your heart to identify any reasons for unanswered prayers. The Bible explains that there are a few reasons why prayer may not be answered.
 - (1) When one is not abiding in Jesus (John 15:7)
 - (2) Because of unbelief (Matthew 17:20-21)
 - (3) Due to unconfessed sin or lack of repentance (James 5:16; 2 Corinthians 12:21)
 - (4) Placing trust in the repetition of words or the length of the prayer (Matthew 6:7)

[C'] 4:4 Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah 4:5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD.

- a) “Be angry, and do not sin” (NKJV, ESV). “Tremble, and do not sin” (NASB). “Stand in awe, and sin not” (ASV).
 - (1) The various renderings of this verse in different English Bible versions are evidence that the first few words can be translated as “any violent emotion, especially anger or fear” (H7264—Strong’s Concordance). It implies shuddering or quivering because of fear. It is the type of fear that keeps one from sinning (cf. Exodus 20:20; Ecclesiastes 12:13).
 - (2) In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul quoted this passage as he applied it to “putting on the new man” in Christian living. Psalm 4:4 is cited in Ephesians 4:26, and every Bible translation renders it as “Be angry and sin not.” Since Paul, who was well educated in the Scriptures, used it in that manner, it provides a strong indication as to how we should interpret the Hebrew words and understand them in the Old Testament.
 - (3) The directive here is not about “avoiding anger” but rather about addressing it properly and promptly. Jesus exemplified a godly response for us by displaying what appears to be the emotion of anger in Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; and John 2:15 (making a whip, driving out vendors, and overturning tables), but doing it for righteous reasons and never because of trivial disputes or personal offenses.
 - (a) His displeasure was focused on sinful behavior and injustice toward God rather than on people’s weaknesses. His actions stemmed from love and concern rather than hatred. Jesus always maintained control over His emotions, never allowing them to lead Him to sin. His displeasure was always temporary and never devolved into bitterness or grudges. Thus, He resolved each contestable situation appropriately. Ultimately, Jesus’ emotions led to godly action, which consistently aligned with God’s will.
 - (b) The quickest way for anger to lead to sin is to allow oneself to become hateful in their words or deeds.

- b) "Meditate" implies that one should think about it in bed before waking up and acting. It angered David that people could so openly oppose godliness and those who try to do what is right.
- c) "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD."
 (1) The Lord will vindicate. Offer the sacrifices that righteous people should, then trust in the Lord. This is why the Psalm is also classified as a Psalm of Trust because that word is in the text. Perhaps, from verse 4, the person spent the night thinking about the direction his life was going and decided to repent, offer sacrifices for sin, and then believe in the promises of God.
- d) In Jewish tradition, Verse 5 is part of the prayers of the "Bedtime Shema." Rabbis of ancient times put together a "good night book" called the *Kriat Sh'ma al haMitah*, or *Bedtime Sh'ma*. It is one of the oldest and most fundamental of Jewish prayers.

[B'] 4:6 There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?" LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

- a) David's friends are wishing for better times and they wonder if the good days will ever return. David knows that if the good days do return, they will return only because God has sent them. So David appropriately appeals to the Lord, who can send those blessings.
- b) The chiasmic parallel to this line is verse 2. The naysayers and slanders cause David grief and anxiety. In each case, David proceeds to appeal to God instead of capitulating to their cynicism.

[A'] 4:7 You have put gladness in my heart, More than in the season that their grain and wine increased. 4:8 I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

- a) "Gladness in my heart"
 (1) Despite the difficult times David is going through he still has a gladness of heart. A key word in the Psalms is "heart," occurring 128 times. He may not have gladness in his external disposition because of the opposition, but internally, he has gladness of heart. The lesson for us today is: One who trusts in God has gladness of heart.
- (2) This also aligns itself with verse 5 of Psalm 3, where David expressed his confidence in lying down and having a restful night's sleep. The restful sleep comes after David has placed everything in the hands of God.
- (3) In Matthew 6 Jesus talks about being anxious for various physical needs. That is not what godly people do. David did what righteous men and women are to do. The difference between the righteous and the unrighteous is what we do with our problems. Do we try to bear up and take it all or do we lay them at the feet of God (cf. 1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6)? If we worry about things to the point that we cannot sleep, then we are not demonstrating the faith and trust that spiritual people should. David had problems as bad as anyone today, yet he was able to sleep. Why? Because he gave his problems to God. Equally, we must develop the same level of trust and confidence. Remember, Jesus taught that it is a sin to worry!

(4) Notice in this Psalm all that God has provided:

- (a) Deliverance (v. 1),
- (b) Assurance in prayer (v. 1),
- (c) Favor (v. 3),
- (d) Joy (v. 7),
- (e) Peace (v. 8) and
- (f) Safety (v. 8).

(5) This psalm has useful application for Christians. We can rejoice that we have all these blessings in Christ!

PSALM 5

Guided in Our Walk

This Psalm is a morning prayer and petition Psalm. “Just as David could face the night with confidence (as in Psalm 3), so could he face each day knowing that God would guide his steps.” (Smith, p.219) We can look at the text and see there is a specific concern within the mind of the psalmist. He voices that concern and then gives a specific request to God of how he would like this concern dealt with. He expresses his trust that the Lord will answer his prayer. This psalm is similar in form to Psalm 7.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Imprecatory Psalm
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple, or Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Romans 3:13

Psalm 5 is an example of numerical poetic structure. A unique characteristic of this psalm is that it seems to emphasize the number five (5). It is the fifth psalm in the collection, with a five-word heading (in Hebrew). God’s name, YHWH (rendered as, “LORD”) is used exactly five times. “The Hebrew letter *HEY* (ה) represents the number five. It appears twice in the sacred Name of God, deeming it a symbol of Divinity.” (Source: bjc.org.au) The psalm can also be easily divided into five sections (see “Chiasmus Summary Example B” below). Above all, this psalm reminds us that worship is central to a believer’s life.

Psalm 5 is our first example of an “Imprecatory Psalm.” These types of psalms are also called “avenge psalms.” *Imprecatory* means “spoken curses.” They are usually in the form of crying out to Yahweh, asking Him to render judgment or vengeance upon the wicked or one’s enemies. Very few psalms are entirely imprecatory. The Biblical purpose of imprecatory writing is to demonstrate how the righteous hoped that temporal punishment might evoke genuine repentance among the wicked (Psalms 83:16; Revelation 9:20-21).

They also demonstrate how the righteous are continually concerned about the sovereignty of God (cf. Psalm 83:18). Even Paul used imprecatory writing to demonstrate how the righteous truly desired vindication for their own life choices. He desired that his choice to believe in the resurrected Christ be vindicated (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). An imprecatory tone and its general character are easily discerned in Psalm 5.

Some scholars consider the imprecatory psalms to be among the most difficult to explain in the Bible. They argue that it is difficult to justify prayers that call for the destruction of others, especially in light of Jesus’ teachings (cf. Matthew 5:44 - “love your enemies”).

Psalm 5 chiastic structure. Various scholars have recommended a few different summary expositions of the chiastic structure of this psalm, which illustrates the

variances Hebrew to English interpretations can have. While the original penman composed the psalm in a traditional Hebrew poetry chiasmus format, determining what he intended or identifying the exact arrangement of the parallelisms can prove to be difficult for modern readers. Some compositions are quite easy to dissect, but in general, outlining the chiasmus of a psalm is a rather subjective process. Here are a couple of examples that have been suggested for Psalm 5:

Simple Chiasmus Summary (Example A):

[A] 5:1-3 The Devout Soul (singular)

[B] 5:4-6 The Wicked

[C] 5:7 Personal

[C'] 5:8 Personal

[B'] 5:9-10 The Wicked

[A'] 5:11-12 The Devout Soul (plural)

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary (Example B):

[A] 5:1-3 Answer Me!

[B] 5:4-6 You Hate Evil

[X] 5:7-8 I Worship You

[B'] 5:9-10 Punish the Evil Doer

[A'] 5:11-12 I Rejoice in Your Answer!

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

In the exposition of the text that follows, we will utilize the same letter structure as Example B, presented here, to help identify the parallel elements of the composition.

[A] 5:1 To the Chief Musician. With Flutes. A Psalm of David. Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my meditation. 5:2 Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, For to You I will pray. 5:3 My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up.

- a) Some Bible translations, such as the KJV and the ASV, render the inscription as “For the Chief Musician; with the *Nehiloth*. A Psalm of David.” Other translations render the word “Nehiloth” (Hebrew: *NECHIYLAH - H5155*) as “flutes” or “wind instruments.”
- b) “Give ear to my words”
 - (1) This is David’s appeal to God to hear him out. He earnestly calls upon God, seeking the Lord’s response to his plea. Much like Psalm 4, this particular psalm opens with an appeal for assistance and concludes with a strong belief that God will indeed respond. David often begins his Psalms in this way.
 - (2) According to verse 3, David liked to begin his day with prayer, which is why this psalm is considered a “morning prayer.” The Psalms are useful for Christians today in that we can use these same words to begin our own prayers if we so desire because the opening address is equally relevant today
 - (3) David is not merely requesting God’s help but actively expecting and anticipating a response. This is a great example of “asking in faith” (James 1:6).
- c) “The voice of my cry”
 - (1) This line finds its chiasmic synthesis in verse 11. The voice of one crying is augmented by “Let them ever shout for joy.” Indeed, one who’s voice is heard by the Almighty Creator should rejoice with shouting aloud!

[B] 5:4 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You. 5:5 The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. 5:6 You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

- a) “Give ear to my words”
 - (1) In these verses, David gets to the point of his concern. He reminds God, “You hate evil!” It is true that God despises all types of wickedness, from boastfulness to shedding of blood, which David as points of reference.
 - (2) He declares an eternal truth - that evil cannot go unpunished. To the reader he states, using just five Hebrew words, “Yahweh abhors bloodthirsty deceitful man.” This also marks the midway point of the five occurrences of God’s name, *YHWH (H3068)* used throughout the passage. The message is clear: God will not overlook the actions of the sinner!
- b) “The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity”
 - (1) Supplemental parallelism is identified between “shall not stand” (V5) and “let them fall” (V10). This is an imprecation, that is, a spoken curse against David’s enemies. It acknowledges how God deals with the wicked and simultaneously asks Him to do just that - punish them.
 - (2) The reason for invoking God’s wrathful justice upon them is because they “speak lies” (V6) and “flatter with the tongue” (V9). Thus, they are wicked “inwardly” (V9) and the “Lord abhors bloodthirsty and deceitful men” (V6). These are more chiasmic parallelisms.

[X] 5:7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. 5:8 Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.

a) "I will worship toward Your holy temple"

(1) Verses 7 and 8 are the central axis of the chiasmus. Psalmists often place their most important thought at the center of the composition. Here, the penman emphasizes bowing in worship before an awe-inspiring God as the center of his prayer.

(2) Indeed, even as Christians, when we pray to God for provision and protection, it is crucial that we maintain a proper perspective of our worship of Him, especially in the midst of our trials.

(3) Verse 8 of this psalm reminds us of Proverbs 3:6, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." If we focus every aspect of our lives on God, He will make our paths straight and guide us in the right way.

[B'] 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is destruction; Their throat is an open tomb; They flatter with their tongue. 5:10 Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, For they have rebelled against You.

a) David explicitly expresses his desire for what he wants God to do. This is why the psalm is considered an Imprecatory Psalms. Through imprecation, David does not want the wicked to succeed in life. He calls on God to bring punishment upon the evil people, as they only use their tongues for evil.

(1) The Bible often emphasizes the tongue's prominent role in an evil life.

Here, a parallelism is discerned between verse 6, where they speak lies, and verse 9, where they continue to flatter and lie.

(2) In the New Testament, James writes about the tongue as, "... a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell." (James 3:6)

b) Paul quotes this Psalm in Romans 3:13 to support the idea that no one is righteous (Romans 3:10). Virtually, every part of man's body is guilty.

[A'] 5:11 But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You. 5:12 For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield.

a) After David expresses what he would like God to do to the wicked, he then expresses what he would like God to do for the righteous. He wants them to:

(1) Be given a heart of gladness with which they would sing with joy.

(2) Be provided a shelter so they might have just cause for exulting in the Lord.

- (3) He wants the Lord to bless the righteous. The idea of blessing is expressed in “surrounding him with favor” - protection - that allows him to not have any discomfort whatsoever.
- b) David again returns to the theme of God being a shield (cf. Psa 3:3). He does not believe the Lord would surround a wicked man, although temporary blessings may cause one to doubt. The key is God’s favor. David knows that the loving God intends to bestow His great blessings on those who are His (cf. Mt 7:9-11).
- c) The psalm ends with rejoicing as the writer declares his confidence that God will both protect and bless the righteous person. Psalm 5 is a great example for us to follow when we face struggles. When we cry out to God for help, we should fully trust God to protect us, and our confidence comes from our humble worship to Him.

PSALM 8

How Majestic Is Your Name!

God's character is amazing in so many ways. One of His marvelous, distinguishing marks is His Holy Name. The psalmist speaks of God's glory and how man's glory and destiny reflect upon God.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Praise & Thanksgiving Psalm (also Messianic)
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Matthew 21:16; Hebrews 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 27; Ephesians 1:22

Psalm 8 contains specific musical instructions within the inscription. The inscription provides much information concerning this composition, such as the audience, "To the Chief Musician," the musical style or sound of the psalm, "On the Gittith," and who the penman of the psalm is, "A Psalm of David." It is quite evident that this psalm was used as a hymn of adoration, perhaps as a call to worship.

Psalm 8 is our first example of a "Praise and Thanksgiving Psalm." This genre of psalms are written to express gratitude for what God has done for His people. They convey feelings of joy, celebration, blessings, exalting God's name, and glorifying Him. Sometimes, these compositions are known as psalms of "Nature" because they often include poetic personifications of the stars, earth, heavens, mountains, and such speaking out, or exalting the Creator of all. Psalm 8 can also be considered a Messianic Psalm because it is quoted four times in the New Testament. Verse 2 - Matt 21:16; verse 4 - Heb 2:6-8; verse 6 - 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22.

Psalm 8 chiastic structure. The structure is immediately identified in the identical words of the opening and closing lines. The lines in between offer proof of the statement. As with many of the psalms, scholars have various recommendations for summary descriptions of the chiastic structure of this psalm. This is due to the variances between the Hebrew to English interpretations that are produced. While the original penman composed this psalm in a traditional Hebrew poetry chiasmus format, for us, as modern readers, it can prove a little difficult to determine what he intended or identify the exact arrangement of the parallelisms. Some compositions are easier to dissect, but in general, outlining the chiasmus of a psalm is a rather subjective process. Here is the Simple Pivot Chiasmus example we will use for Psalm 8:

Simple Chiasmus Summary:

- [A] 1a The Majesty of God's Name
- [B] 1b-2 God's Glory is Above the Heavens
- [C] 3 Humanity is Trivial in the Heavens

[X] 4-5 What is man?

[C'] 6 Humanity is Significant on the Earth

[B'] 7-8 Man's Glory is Above the Earth

[A'] 9 The Majesty of God's Name

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 8.

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] 8:1 To the Chief Musician. On the Instrument of Gath. A Psalm of David.
O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth,

a) "O LORD, our Lord"

- (1) Names are extremely important! For the Hebrews, this was especially true. David begins this Psalm by identifying the two common names used for God: **Yahweh** and **Adonai**.
- (2) The first word translated as "Lord" (often rendered in capital letters) is the Hebrew word **YHWH - H3068**. This is the personal or proper name of God. It is also known as the "Tetragrammaton" or the Tetragram. YHWH is the third most frequent word found in the Old Testament text (behind the words "the" and "and"), with more than 6500 occurrences!
 - (a) It literally means "He exists" or self-existent.
 - (b) God's name is written in the text with the four letters Y-H-W-H. The pronunciation is "Yah-weh" or "Yah-veh." However, we don't know how the ancient Hebrews actually pronounced the word. They did not want to say God's name out loud in reverence to Him, so the vowels were left out when written. When referring to God, they simply said: "Lord" (*Adonai*) instead. By adding the vowels of the Hebrew word *Adonai* to the consonants for YHWH, the modern word and pronunciation become "Yahweh."
 - (c) Many Hebrew Lexicons and English Bible translations ascribe the word "Jehovah" to YHWH. In reality, *Jehovah* is a mispronunciation of *Yahweh* due to a foreign accent. There are several languages that pronounce the letter "Y" with a "J" sound. Some also pronounce a "V" with a "W" sound and "W" with a "V" sound (such as German). Thus, when applied to a word like YHWH, one might incorrectly say, "JeHoVaH." However, the Old Testament was written in ancient Hebrew, and that language has always followed very specific rules for pronunciation. In the Hebrew language, the first syllable of YHWH may have been pronounced as "Yi," "Ya," or even "Yo" but each is with a Y sound and never with a "J" (jay, juh) sound. While there is nothing inherently wrong with using the word

“Jehovah” for God’s name, it’s simply our preference to use Yahweh in this study.

(3) The second word translated “Lord” is the Hebrew word **ADONAI - H1113**.

(a) *Adoni* or *Adonai* is a term of respect. It is used as a verbal replacement for the written sacred name of God, Yahweh. It refers to God's absolute sovereignty over creation.

(b) This word is most often translated as “Lord” (223 times in the KJV), and “master” (105 times in the KJV). It is most often associated with God’s name, but is also used as a reference to men, such as head of the household, a governor, or a king. To the ancient Hebrews, to call someone “Lord” meant rendering submission to them.

(4) Using these terms together conveys how only YHWH is worthy to be one’s Lord. Specifically, when God’s power is seen in creation, and how He deals with man, only one logical conclusion will result. He deserves to be my Lord. I must submit to Him.

b) “How excellent is Your name”

(1) Names don’t mean much in our modern cultures, but to the Hebrews, they carried great significance. David declares that His name is the most majestic out of the literally thousands of names that exist on the earth (including both man and beast).

(2) This line serves as the opening phrase for the first pairing in the composition. It is repeated verbatim in verse 8. Thus, the psalm begins and ends by magnifying Yahweh’s holy name.

[B] 8:1b Who have set Your glory above the heavens! 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

a) “Who have set Your glory above the heavens!”

(1) David also declares that God has displayed His splendor above the heavens. It is noteworthy that the heavens often proved to be an area of idolatry with the worship of the sun, moon and stars (i.e. the “queen of heaven” - Jeremiah 44:17; Ezekiel 8:16).

(2) When one observes the wonder of childbirth it speaks volumes concerning God’s awesome power. Jesus uses this verse to let the Pharisees know that the Son of God must receive praise (Matthew 21:16). Equally, when one sees the greatness of God in creation he will immediately cease being an adversary of God’s. Why? Because he can see that he is no match for one as powerful as God.

b) The latter part of verse one and all of verse two emphasize God’s glory (that is, His magnificence and beauty) as being far greater than the heavens. This thought is paralleled in verses 7 and 8 and applied to mankind. Man’s glory is associated with and limited to the earth.

[C] 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

a) “When I consider ...”

(1) God wants man to give serious thought and consideration to the wonders of creation. Indeed, the vastness and greatness of the skies, with their

planets and stars, are fitting testimony to God's omnipotence. He spoke these things into existence! (Genesis 1-2) and it all rests in His mighty hands.

- (2) This verse provides another parallel thought presented by David, that humanity is trivial in the grand scheme of the expansive heavens. It certainly causes one to reflect on how small mankind is in relation to Almighty Yahweh. The parallel to this is seen in verse 6.

[X] 8:4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? 8:5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

a) "What is man ...?"

- (1) Verses 4-5 (in our English Bibles) serve as the central axis of the composition. The psalmist emphasizes man's place in the grand scheme of creation. On either side of this pivot point, or Axis of the chiasmic structure, are parallel lines that paint the picture of mankind being insignificant in the physical realm but extremely important to God in the spiritual realm. David transitions from the worldly (earth, heavens, babes, enemies) to the spiritual (angels, crown).

- (2) David has identified several reasons to acknowledge God's greatness:

- (a) His great name (v. 1).
- (b) His power is seen in the creation of man (v. 2).
- (c) His power is seen in the heavens (v. 3).

- (3) In view of these points, it would be easy for man to consider himself small and completely insignificant. Yet, there are two points that David finds incredible:

- (a) That God would even think about man, and
- (b) That God would care about man. Why would such a great God care about someone as small as me?

- (4) Of all of the elements of God's creation, from the planets to the plants, from the animals to the birds, man is God's crowning act. It is man who has been given glory and majesty. Not the plants, animals, or stars. It is man who was made in the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26)!

- b) The writer of Hebrews quotes this remarkable section (including v. 6) to illustrate the superiority of Jesus over mankind (Hebrews 2:6-8).

[C'] 8:6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,

- a) God's love for mankind is seen in the position He placed man. All of the creation was to be subject to man (Gen 1:26,28).

- (1) In verse 3, David considers how trivial humanity is compared to the heavens and in comparison to Almighty Yahweh. In this line, he parallels that thought by recognizing that although man is insignificant in nature, he is important in stature. Man is the pinnacle of creation to the Creator. Mankind is important to God. So important, that he gave man dominion over the earth.

- (2) Paul uses this verse to talk about the supreme power Jesus has in His kingdom. He is presently reigning and will continue to do so until all things

are put under His feet and then He Himself will step down (1 Corinthians 15:27).

[B'] 8:7 All sheep and oxen—Even the beasts of the field, 8:8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas.

- a) David here illustrates all those creatures God has placed at man's disposal.
- b) The phrase "paths of the sea" encouraged sailor Matthew Fontaine Maury to look for underwater currents that could benefit ocean travel. He found those "paths" and mapped them out, which are still used today. This is just one of many examples of the scientific foreknowledge that is found in the Bible. It is yet one more reason, or evidence, that the Bible is the infallible, inspired word of God.

[A'] 8:9 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!

- a) Here is the closing parallelism to complete the thought of this Praise Psalm. David repeats the clause he began with - beginning and ending by magnifying Yahweh's holy name. God is certainly worthy of praise, and this Psalm gives us a multitude of reasons to do so!

PSALM 15

Who Shall Dwell on Your Holy Hill?

This Psalm describes the one who will be allowed to stand in the presence of Yahweh when He appears in glory. In James Smith's Old Testament Survey Series, this psalm is presented as part of a grouping for a topic he calls "Living Victoriously" (pp. 227-230). Psalms 11-14 deal with overcoming fear, hypocrisy, anxiety, and corruption. Psalm 15 is then the reward for overcoming those emotions and sinful practices. Indeed, a parallel can easily be drawn between this psalm and what the Lord promises those who overcome in Revelation 2:17.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Pilgrimage Psalm
Poetic Device / Structure:	Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	2 Samuel 6:12-19

Psalm 15 is our first example of a Pilgrimage Psalm. These psalms were a special type of hymn or poem sung during public worship. It is believed that Pilgrimage Psalms were chanted or sung out while the Israelites made their way to Jerusalem for the annual Jewish feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16-17) or while ascending to and entering the Temple. It has been suggested that David composed this psalm in association with transporting the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. As he and the entourage ascended to the city and the Ark was placed in the tent he had prepared (2 Samuel 16:17), perhaps it motivated the thought for this psalm.

Psalm 15 is our last example of the six classifications or genres of psalms that we will be using in this Bible course. (For more information on all six types, please refer to "Classifications of Psalms" in the "Interpretation Guidelines" section or Chart 2 in the Appendix.)

While Psalm 15 is not specifically cited by the New Testament writers, many parallels and similarities can be identified between the two. While reading through and studying Psalm 15, consider how the principles of this psalm parallels passages such as Romans 8:1-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 3:17-18; and 1 John 1:5-10.

Psalm 15 implements two different poetic devices. One is a chiasmic structure using a Simple Pivot Chiasmus. The other is a simple three-part structure of a Question, an Answer, and a Conclusion. The psalmist begins the composition with a very important concern and then ends it with a promise.

The following graphic illustrates the suggested chiasmic structure of the psalm with some of its parallelisms and parts emphasized by bold letters and underlines. The exposition of the text that follows uses the same outlined letter structure as presented here in order to assist in identifying the various parallel elements.

[A] Question: 1 Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

[B] First Answer: 2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth 3 does not backbite ... Nor does evil ... Nor does he take up a reproach

[X] 4a In whose eyes a vile person is despised, He who honors those who fear the LORD;

[B'] Second Answer: 4b He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; ... does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

[A'] Conclusion: 5b He who does these things shall never be moved.

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 15
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

[A] 15:1 A Psalm of David. LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

a) "A Psalm of David"

(1) The word "psalm" in the inscription is the Hebrew word *MIZMOR* (*H4210*). It means "melody of praise." The term is used 57 times in the Psalms and "by implication, is a poem set to notes, or a song that is accompanied by a musical instrument" (see Strongs Concordance).

(2) For more information on the various musical and technical terms used in the Psalms, refer to "Chart 6 - Important Technical Terms in the Psalms" in the Appendix.

b) **QUESTION:** "Who may abide? Who may dwell?"

(1) In a figurative sense, David's question here reflects a desire to be in the presence of God in perpetual worship. It cannot be a literal request because he was not a priest. Only those priests appointed from the tribe of Levi could enter the holy place of God. The Tabernacle (or tent) was God's holy "dwelling place" where He had met with Moses in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 25:21-22), and now, in David's time, where the High Priest entered to bring an offering of atonement (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:24-25).

(2) To "abide" or "dwell" suggests to be continually received as a guest or become a resident in the house of the Lord. When one abides, it means to remain or stay put indefinitely. The heart's desire of the psalmist should be the desire of all of God's faithful children - to be with Him.

(3) This opening question sets the tone for the subsequent parallelisms, which answer the inquiry and culminate in a final conclusion. Verse 15b is the synthetic parallel to verse 1.

[B] 15:2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; 3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

a) **FIRST ANSWER:** The one granted access to God's presence is the one who demonstrates these three positive behaviors and does not do these three negative ones in their lives. Here is a description of what a child of God is and is not.

(1) "Walking uprightly" is the first positive behavior. It is a description of one who is obedient to God. The word "walk" is used frequently in the Bible as an analogy for how one lives their life. Jesus equated walking with a choice of direction in Matthew 7:13-14. The contrast, or negative attribute to obedience, is "He who does not backbite with his tongue." Interestingly, the word for backbite (or slander) is a Hebrew term that means "to go on foot, spy out, walk along; slander; gossip." It insinuates one skulking about to do harm, as opposed to walking upright.

(2) "Works righteousness" is the second positive behavior. It's interesting how quickly some want to point out, "No one is saved by works! It's only by God's grace that we are saved." Yet, the Bible is replete with mandates of "works" that one must do in order to be and remain a faithful servant of God (Matthew 5:16; James 2:14-26; Revelation 20:12). Even here in this passage, the term "works" is connected with righteousness. This means that those who desire to be with God must do those good, godly things and live lives of integrity. It is done as a *response* to God's incredible love, not as performing some deed or ritual in order to earn something from God. This godly behavior is starkly contrasted with "Nor does evil to his neighbor." Most assuredly, those who do what is right will shun doing wrong to others.

(3) "Speaking truth" rounds out the third aspect of the godly individual in this strophe. His/her way of living (walking upright) is characterized by exhibiting good behaviors (working righteousness) and also by what comes out of their mouth (speaking truth). The contrast, or negative trait, is in verse three, "Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend." Indeed, one who maintains integrity of speech, will never accuse his neighbor falsely.

b) Isaiah 33:13-17 uses similar language as this psalm.

[X] 15:4a In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD;

a) Here, we have the central axis or pivot point of the chiasmus. On either side of this center line, the psalmist replies to the initial question with practical examples. Some Bible students do not identify this line as the axis but instead as part of the second half of an ABCCBA concentric structure.

(1) The godly individual described in the parallel lines of verses 2 and 4b opposes evil and those who practice it. Some Bible translations render this

line as “He hates sinful people.” The sentiment here is similar to what Jesus said in Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not *hate* [despise] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” Neither Jesus nor the psalmist is promoting hateful thoughts or behavior toward others. Instead, it is simply a means of emphasizing how much more we are to love God - more than anyone or anything else in this world.

(2) “Honoring those who fear God” has its parallel in Romans 12:9-10 and Galatians 6:10.

[B’] 15:4b He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

a) **SECOND ANSWER:** The psalmist continues to answer the question and describe what a child of God is and is not. It is the one who demonstrates these additional two positive behaviors and does not do these two negative things. Here is the ascending parallel line within the chiasmus to the three characteristics outlined in verses 2 and 3.

(1) “Swears to his own hurt and does not change” are two positive behaviors found in the godly individual. This means that he keeps his word, fulfills his promises, and never modifies his character in the process. He does so, even if it may wind up costing him in the end.

(2) The negative, or what he does not do, is “never lend money at interest to a brother in need (cf. Lev 25:36f); nor would he take bribes to render judgments against the innocent (Deut 27:25)” as James Smith states in his commentary (Wisdom Literature & Psalms, p. 230).

[A’] 15:5b He who does these things shall never be moved.

a) **CONCLUSION:** God will allow this person to remain in His presence. The concept of “shall never be moved” signifies that this righteous individual will dwell as a guest in God's tent eternally, as referenced in Psalm 61:4, or as the Apostle John wrote, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17).

b) Application

(1) No one enters into God's presence by one's own accord. While God certainly desires that His creation abide with Him, He still has specific requirements for those who wish to enter. There is a “form of doctrine” that must be “obeyed from the heart” (Romans 6:17). It is called obeying the Gospel (cf. John 3:16, 14:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Once a lost individual is saved and becomes a child of God, he must then “remain faithful until death” (Revelation 2:10) in order to continue abiding or dwelling with Him (Hebrews 6:4-6). Thus, the same godly characteristics that David describes in this psalm are still required of faithful children of God today.

(2) Praise God! He made a way for us to approach Him through Jesus! “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”(Hebrews 4:16)

PSALM 18

The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress

This Psalm is David's beautiful song to the Lord for making him victorious. God is the ultimate foundation of David's life. He is the reason for all his blessings and success. In response, David will sing praises to the One Who is worthy! The words here are almost identical to those of the song David sang in 2 Samuel 22.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Messianic / Royal / Thanksgiving / Imprecatory
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Romans 15:9; 2 Samuel 22

Psalm 18 is the longest psalm in Book I and the fourth longest in the entire book (Psalms 78, 89, and 119 are longer). Its title provides much information about its penman, David, and the circumstances behind its inspiration. The events of 2 Samuel 5, 8, and 10 could be considered companion chapters to the song sung by David in 2 Samuel 22:1-51, connecting them to this psalm. We also learn from the inscription to whom the psalm was written: God. In addition, many words from Psalm 18 have been used as the source of a few popular modern devotional songs and hymns sung by the church.

Psalm 18 has elements of several psalm types. First, it is primarily a Psalm of Praise and Thanksgiving (vv 3, 46, 49). Secondly, many classify this as a Royal/Messianic psalm, perhaps because of the descriptions of majesty and kingship, ascribed to both God and David himself (vv 13, 50). Yet, Psalm 18 clearly has many characteristics of an Imprecatory Psalm, as David speaks of being avenged from his enemies (vv 17,47,48), subduing them (vv 37,38), and being triumphant over them (v3).

Psalm 18 is easily identifiable as a song written in a Simple Pivot Chiasmus form. Although some commentators state that this psalm has no organization, the classic Hebrew parallelism is immediately seen between the opening lines (vv2,3) and the last lines (vv49,50) forming the A pair. The B pairing requires one to consider the divine power of Yahweh. Many words are used to describe His power, "devouring fire, He made, He rode, thundered, sent out," etc., (vv4-19) are paralleled with "He makes, He teaches, He gives," etc. (v32-48). The C pairs don't seem obvious at first glance, but since it is in the middle of a structure where the rest of it is undisputed, they have to be paired together, somehow. Following the pattern should lead one to try and find a common theme for them both. We see them in how His "ways, judgments" and "humbleness, righteousness" are paralleled between verses 20-24 and 27-31. The Axis of the song is found in verses 25-26.

There are a few other opinions about the chiastic structure offered, which make verses 25-29 the Axis, dividing the composition into ABCDE pairs, or dividing the entire psalm into an ABCCBA arrangement. Most commentaries of the Psalms do not mention, or include any information about the poetic structure of the compositions. James E.

Smith's "Wisdom Literature and Psalms" Commentary is an exception, providing the following summary of the chiasmic structure of Psalm 18 in his book (p. 236):

- [A] Praise to the Deliverer (1-3)
- [B] Divine Power (4-19)
- [C] Divine Procedure (20-24)
- [X] **Divine Principles (25-26)**
- [C'] Divine Procedure (27-31)
- [B'] Divine Power (32-48)
- [A'] Praise to the Deliverer (49-50)

Graphic: Chiasmic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 18

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

SUMMARY EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT

Due to the length of Psalm 18, we will not include the text of the Scripture (please refer to your own copy of the Word of God). A summary is provided here to highlight some of the main points and illustrations, using the chiasmus framework presented above.

- [A] PRAISE TO THE DELIVERER (18:1-3)
 - a) "I will love you, O Lord."
 - (1) David is thankful for all that God has done for him. He responds by saying he will love Yahweh deeply and with zealous affection. It is a trait seen frequently in David, as he was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).
 - b) David uses a series of different endearing terms, or metaphors to describe the person of God. These are terms that resonated with the reader then and still do today.
 - (1) "My strength" (v1) - is the Hebrew word, *CHEZEQ* (H2391). It is related to a similar word that means to grow strong or firm. From where did David's strength come? It came from the Lord, who had delivered him from his enemies.
 - (2) "My rock" - *SELA* (H5553) is an unusual word meaning a lofty cliff, stone, or firmament. It figuratively implies security. Indeed, God is our firm foundation providing eternal security.
 - (3) "My fortress" is the Hebrew word *MATSUD*, *METSUDAH* (H4686), and may refer to the imposing rock plateau in the Jordan Valley that is known

today as Masada. David may have hidden there while fleeing from Saul. It would later become an important Judean fortress.

- (4) "My deliverer"— *PALAT* (H6403) implies that God preserved David's life in times of peril. He was often almost surrounded and captured, but the Lord always made a way for his escape. Christians might also apply this same name of God, as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 10:13, that with any temptation, God "will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."
 - (5) "My God" - this is the word *EL* (H410) which is one of several names for God in Hebrew. Yahweh, Adonai, and Elohim are the most common. "*EL*" very seldom appears alone but usually with an attribute attached, such as *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), *El Roi* (God my Shepherd), and *El Olam* (Everlasting God). It is also the suffix of many names like *Gabriel* ("Strength of God"), *Daniel* ("My judgment is God"), *Ezekiel* ("God shall strengthen"), *Israel* ("One who has struggled with God"), and *Immanuel* ("God is with us") among many others.
 - (6) "My strength/rock" - this is the first occurrence of the word Hebrew word *TSUR* (H6697) in the Psalms and is found some 79 times throughout the Old Testament writings. It is a word that is often used to describe Yahweh's faithfulness and steadfastness.
 - (7) "My shield" - *MAGEN* (H4043) is sometimes translated as "buckler" (KJV) or "defense" (cf. Psalm 7:10). David was a military man. He was very familiar with weapons and armor. The shield represents defense from and immediate protection from the enemy's weapons. It protects both the most vital organs, the head and the heart. The Apostle Paul reminds Christians, "above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Ephesians 6:16) as part of the armor of God.
 - (8) "The horn of my salvation" - if the shield is a defensive weapon, then the horn is one for offense. Not only are we protected by Yahweh and His mighty power, but He also fights battle for us. The combination of the shield and the horn result in being saved from enemies.
 - (9) "My stronghold" - *MISGAB* (H4869) can also be interpreted as "high tower" or "refuge." Towers were typically erected on rocks or as part of city walls. They provided safety because they were not easily accessible.
- c) "I will call upon the Lord"
- (1) Because of the many attributes of God that David describes here, he will always go to him for help in times of trouble and danger, and he will sing praises to His name!

[B] DIVINE POWER (18:4-19)

- a) "The pangs of death ... the sorrows of Sheol ... in my distress ..."
- (1) David now describes the perils and extreme situations in which he had called out to Yahweh. God heard him and answered his prayers, not in some quiet, unassuming way, but with a great display of power and authority. From the heavenly realms, God reached out to save David. Why? Because "He delighted in me" (v19) says David.

(2) The same provisions God supplied to David are extended to us today through God's mercy and grace in bringing us salvation. He reached down from heaven, through the incarnation of His Son (John 1:14) and made redemption possible through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. In our own pangs, sorrows, and distress, Jesus says, "Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28).

[C] DIVINE PROCEDURE (18:20-24)

b) "For I have kept the ways of the Lord"

(1) This pairing is titled "Divine Procedure" because David demonstrates the "procedure" for being righteous: do what God commands! David was fully knowledgeable of God's commands and statutes. It is with such understanding that he "kept himself from iniquity."

(2) This is the same principle Jesus used in the hour of temptation (Matthew 4; Luke 4). When sin crouched at the door through Satan's enticement, Jesus's response was to quote Scripture, "It is written." He knew the Scriptures. Thus, He kept the ways of the Lord. We can do the same as David and Jesus, if we put God's word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

c) "Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness"

(1) Because David remained faithful to God, God rewarded him. Jesus promises the same to His disciples today, (Revelation 2:10).

[X] DIVINE PRINCIPLES (18:25-26)

a) Verses 25-26 are the Axis or pivot point of the psalm. The emphasis is noted in general principles of how Yahweh deals with mankind. If a man or woman is obedient to Him, exhibiting mercy and goodness to others, He will provide the same to that man or woman. If one walks in purity, God will reveal Himself to them. These each sound similar to the Beatitudes Jesus spoke in Matthew 5.

b) But to the one who is wicked, perverse, or crooked, God will be a harsh judge. The principles here are reflected in Jesus' admonition, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

[C'] DIVINE PROCEDURE (18:27-31)

a) "For You will save the humble people"

(1) The C pairings of the chiasmus (vv20-24 and 27-31) are seen in the principle of how God deals with man. The first pairing is bookended with the thought of being rewarded (v20) and having been recompensed (v24). This pairing emphasizes that such blessings only come to those who humble themselves.

(2) The lamp that God lights is a symbol of His preserving the life of David. It was a common practice in his culture to have a lamp constantly lit within the home.

(3) David also references how God helped him in his battles and conquests, yet another blessing for being faithful and obedient to Yahweh.

b) "As for God, His way is perfect"

(1) Again, the “divine procedure” aspect of this pairing is emphasized. God’s way works! His word “is proven” by the things He has done and therefore, His methods are without fault. That is why David can say no one else is his Rock except God.

c) “Who is God, except the Lord”

(1) David uses yet another name of God in this line, *ELOAH (H433)*. “For who is Eloah, except Yahweh?” Albert Barnes explains, “No other being has evinced the power, the wisdom, and the goodness which properly belong to the true God; or, that the things which are implied in the true nature of God are found in no other being.” (Barnes Notes on the Old Testament, pg. 158)

[B’] DIVINE POWER (18:32-48)

a) Several parallels can be identified between what God does for David in the first B pairing (verses 4-19) and what David received in this pairing (verses 32-48).

(1) “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation” (v35) is contrasted with “He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe” (v14)

(2) I “cried [*Shava - H7768*] out to my God, He heard my voice” (v6) is contrasted with “they cried [*Shava - H7768*], but no one is there to save” (v41).

(3) “He delivered me from my strong enemy [*Ayab - H340*], and from them which hated me [*Sane - H8130*]” (v17) is paralleled with “You have also given me the necks of my enemies [*Ayab - H340*], So that I destroyed those who hated me [*Sane - H8130*]” (v40).

b) “Blessed be my rock”

(1) A third time, David calls God his “rock.” It is the prevailing thought throughout the song. Two of those times he uses the word *TSUR (H6697)* in verses 31 and 46, emphasizing it is a symbol of stability. Only God can provide a solid foundation for mankind, all else is fleeting (1 John 2:15-16).

c) “Let the God of my salvation be exalted”

(1) Indeed! God should be praised because he was David’s salvation in a temporal, physical sense, saving him frequently from his many enemies; and also in a spiritual sense, rewarding and blessing him with a celestial inheritance.

[A’] Praise to the Deliverer (18:49-50)

a) “I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.”

(1) The Apostle Paul cites this verse in Romans 15:9, to express how the Gentiles would be united with the Jews in offering praise to God within the church of the Lord.

b) “Great deliverance He gives to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore.”

(1) David is the chosen, anointed king of Yahweh to Israel. David’s descendants would be the lineage from which the Messiah would come. Thus, King David is a type of Christ whom God had safely brought through all conflicts with the forces of evil and given dominion over all.

PSALM 19

The Law of the Lord Is Perfect

This Psalm celebrates two marvelous revelations of God. David praises God for how He has revealed Himself in Scripture and in nature. Psalm 8 may be considered a companion psalm because it compliments many of the things written here.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Praise / Thanksgiving Psalm
Poetic Device / Structure:	Compound Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Romans 1:18-25

Psalm 19 is another example of a Praise Psalm. The psalmist gives no indication as to why he is writing other than to acknowledge and praise his Creator. It logically divides into three sections: revelation through His creation (vv. 1-6), revelation through His inspired Word (vv. 7-11), and a prayer asking for forgiveness (vv. 12-14). In that sense, the modern reader can easily identify with every statement within this beautiful composition and utilize the same words in one's own personal prayers. In fact, C.S. Lewis expressed his appreciation for this psalm with, "I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world."

Psalm 19 is our first example of a Complex Chiasmus. This form is rather more complicated than the simple pivot chiasmus because it has one or more concentric structure(s) and/or pivot points within the overall chiasmus. The following graphics illustrate the suggested chiastic structure of this psalm. We have included two possibilities of chiastic outlines: a simple pivot chiasmus and a complex chiasmus with the sub-chiastic structures emphasized. The exposition of the text that follows uses the same outlined letter structure as presented in Example B in order to assist in identifying the various parallel elements.

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary Outline (Example A):

- [A] 1, The testimony of heaven: it glorifies God;
- [B] 2-6 Their witness is obvious to all + cannot be hidden
- [X] 7-10 The LAW of YHWH is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, desirable, sweet;
- [B'] 11-13 My witness is in keeping Your word;
- [A'] 14 Let my (mouth + heart) likewise be acceptable YHWH

Suggested Complex/Compound Chiasmus of Psalm 19 (Example B):

[A] The Revelation of God in Nature (1-6) 1-6 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. 2 Day unto day utters speech ... 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them, He has set a tabernacle for the sun ... there is nothing hidden ...

[B] The Revelation of God in Scripture (7-11)

[a] 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

[b] 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

[x] 9a The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever:

[b'] 9b the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

[a'] 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

[A'] Man's Heart Responds to the Revelation of God (12-14) 12-13 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. ... from presumptuous sins ... Then I shall be blameless ... I shall be innocent ... 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 19

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN NATURE (1-6)

[A] 19:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. 2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race. 6 Its

rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

- a) David begins by acknowledging how nature reveals a significant truth: God's existence is seen in the beauty and perfection of what He has created.
- b) Using Hebrew parallelism (see Interpretation Guidelines), the second line repeats the thought of the first line. Thus, the word heavens is the same as the word firmament in the second line. The word firmament is actually a poor translation because it is based on the ancient (and false) concept that the heavenly bodies are fixed, or firm, in the heavens. The true Hebrew meaning of the word is "wide open spaces."
 - (1) If one is inclined to listen, God's creation tells an amazing story every day the sun rises - the story of God's tremendous attributes. The teachings of creation are silent teachings. No words are necessary. The sheer splendor of it all speaks volumes. Think about it. Knowledge is obtained simply through observation because one is able to see:
 - (a) God's power (to simply call things into existence),
 - (b) His perfect knowledge (by being able to make a perfect dwelling for man),
 - (c) His love (by making a dwelling place so suitable and beautiful)
 - (2) Yet, this is just a small sample of what the creation can teach the careful observer!
- c) "Their line has gone out through all the earth"
 - (1) The Hebrew of this verse has caused some confusion. Depending on the translation of the word "line," there are two possible thoughts:
 - (a) If one uses the word "line" (as does the ASV, KJV, NKJV, and NASB), then the thought is that creation displays careful design and construction following its architectural lines.
 - (b) If the word is translated as "sound" ("message," or "voice" as does the ESV) then the thought is that God's thunder is a powerful voice that is heard throughout the world.
 - (2) Paul quotes this verse to demonstrate the widespread influence the preaching of the Gospel has had (Rom 10:18).
- d) "Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end"
 - (1) Verse 6 seems to support the translation of "line" in verse 4 since it continues the thought. The heavens provide a beautiful backdrop for the magnificent entrance of the sun each morning. The sun seems unstoppable as it marches across the sky in a linear pattern.
 - (2) The sun truly is a remarkable testimony to God's wondrous power. Its heat benefits all below it and it has proven to be a consistent workhorse, rising and setting each day as God has ordained it.

[B] THE REVELATION OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE (7-11)

- a) David now moves into the second section of this praise Psalm. In a style similar to Psalm 119, he praises God for His holy and inspired Word (vv. 7-14). Not only has God revealed Himself to mankind through His Creation, but He has also provided His written Word, penned by inspired men (2 Peter 1:20-21)

- b) The next five verses form the middle of the chiasmus, which is usually the pivot point of the composition. In this particular case, the psalmist breaks the middle point into several sub-points, creating an axis within the pivot point. This appears to be emphasizing Scripture as its main focus.
 - c) One immediately notices the adjectives David uses to describe God's Word. He says the Word is:
 - (1) Perfect and sure (v. 7),
 - (2) Right, pure, and enlightening (v. 8),
 - (3) Clean, enduring, true, and righteous (v. 9).
 - d) Because of these nine qualities, David notes that the Word then becomes a source of joy (v. 8), desirable, sweet (v. 10), and rewarding (v. 11).
- [a] 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;**
- a) When David describes God's Word, he calls it perfect. The idea here is that it is "blameless" or without fault. David sees no imperfections in the law of God. If there are any problems it is with him, not with God's Holy Word. The same is true for God's word today! If all of mankind could be wise enough to see that there are no faults with God's Word and that by following it, they would be following a perfect guide, then they would see how it is able to restore one's soul.
 - b) David also describes God's testimony as sure. He means that God's Word is reliable and trustworthy. In what way? It is able to take one who is simple (naive or uneducated) and make him wise.
- [b] 19:8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;**
- a) Right means fair, just, or equitable. David does not consider God's commands to be unreasonable or harsh. He also knows that one finds true inner joy when he lives according to God's instructions.
 - b) Pure carries the idea of perfection or without fault. However, it can also mean it is bright or radiant (perhaps making a comparison to verses 4-6). David also says that God's Word enlightens the eyes, meaning that with study one can see more clearly God's truths as well as the meaning of life. When one is able to see clearly where they are going they are less likely to stumble (cf. 2 Pet 1:9-10).
- [x] 19:9a The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;**
- a) Here is what appears to be the central idea, or pivoting point of the psalm. It is positioned within its own chiasmus pertaining to the Scriptures (verses 7-11). Before and after this line are descriptions of the Word of God, but this line emphasizes the result or the heart of what the Word does to an individual. Once one becomes aware of God through nature and His inspired Word, it should provoke a realization of one's place in the grand scheme of life. God is the Creator, we are the creation. He is the Potter, and we are the clay. Thus, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

- b) Fear is not a word typically used to qualify the Word of God, but perhaps the idea here is the same as found in Proverbs 1:7. God's Word is fear-causing. This fear is clean, which parallels David's words in Psalm 12:6.
- c) David also acknowledges it is God's Word that is enduring forever, which stands in contrast to the temporal words and thinking of man (cf. 1 Pet 1:24-25).

[b'] 19:9b The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

- a) God's judgments (in His Word) are also true judgments. There are no wrong decisions made by God. As God, what He declares is always perfectly equitable and fair. Man, however, has the tendency to be unfair in judgments (cf. Mt 7:1-2). It is still true, however, that when we make judgments based on God's Word they are righteous judgments (Jn 7:24). If God has condemned a certain practice and we fail to also condemn such, then we are not acting the way God would have us act. We are responsible for being a pillar and support of God's truth as stated in 1 Timothy 3:15.
- b) When one's heart is right, then he is sincerely interested in knowing how God has decided concerning certain things. To him, knowing what God has said is more valuable than the finest gold. In addition, God's Word provides as much pleasure as sweet-tasting honey.

[b'] 19:11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.

- a) As one goes through life, he encounters many dangers. But, if he has exercised wisdom, he knew about those dangers beforehand. How? He has learned from God's Word (cf. Psalm 17:4). The reward David has in mind is probably a temporal reward, including all that he has mentioned up to this point. Truly we receive great blessings in this life when we try to live according to God's directives.
- b) Verse 11 is the final parallelism in the sub-chiasmus of the "B" strophe. Its parallel is seen in verse 7, "converting the soul." How is the soul converted? By heeding the warnings. What is the reward? Having a soul that is aligned with God's will - for the Christian, it brings the hope and assurance of eternal life (Matthew 7:21).

MAN'S HEART RESPONDS TO THE REVELATION OF GOD (12-14)

[A'] 19:12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be 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 strength and my Redeemer.

- a) This great Psalm concludes with a prayer. Upon acknowledging God's existence, power, and glory as revealed in nature and the Scriptures, David asks, "Can one know or understand what mistakes or sins they have?" The

answer is clearly “Yes” because David then asked for forgiveness - to be cleansed of any wrongdoing.

- (1) Since God’s law details what sin is (Romans 3:20), if one is ignorant of what the law says, he may be sinning and not realize it. Yet the responsibility has always fallen upon us to learn and know God’s laws (cf. 2 Tim 2:15). When David speaks of hidden or “secret faults,” it is unclear whether he means:
 - (a) Sins unnoticed because they are so common to man,
 - (b) Lesser sins that have received less attention or
 - (c) Sins of ignorance or inadvertence.
 - (2) The Law of Moses addressed sins committed unwittingly or unintentionally, in contrast to sins committed defiantly (Numbers 15:27-36).
- b) “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins”
- (1) In continuing with the thought of verse 12 David expresses concern with arrogant sin. These types of sins are done deliberately and with forethought, perhaps assuming that there will be no consequences for the action. Yet, David is interested in being God’s servant, not Satan’s. He wants God to rule in his life, not sin (cf. Romans 6:12-13).
 - (2) It is important to note the overriding idea in this discussion. David clearly believes continued exposure to God’s precepts will lead him away from sinful behavior and to God. This is the same idea as Psalm 119:11, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.” We would all do well to embrace the same belief. David was a man after God’s own heart because he did not want to have sin in his life. He truly wanted to be blameless, having been acquitted of transgression.
- c) “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”
- (1) David wants all that he says and does to be acceptable to God. He has no desire to be a man-pleaser. He wants to be a God-pleaser. David was concerned with being what God wanted him to be rather than what he might have wanted for himself. This was also the selfless attitude of Paul in Galatians 2:20.
 - (2) This verse finds its parallel in verse 1. There, the heavens declare God’s glory. Here, David’s mouth and heart declare God’s glory. That glory to David meant that God was his:
 - (a) Strength (“Rock” in ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB) - the solid, stabilizing influence in his life, and
 - (a) Redeemer - the One who would come and purchase David for Himself and be his defender.

PSALM 22

The Cross

For many, this deeply expressive Psalm is immediately recognizable from the words Jesus spoke at His crucifixion: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Psalm 22 is a remarkable description of what the Messiah experienced while suffering upon that cruel cross. It is also a treasury of rich Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled. While the psalmist, himself never experienced the torment of being crucified, his inspired pen gives the modern reader a most moving and amazing perspective of the physical and mental agony endured by our Savior in our stead.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	Matthew 27:35,43 & 46; John 19:24; Hebrews 2:12

Psalm 22 is the first part of a grouping or triad of psalms known as “The Cross, the Crook, and the Crown.” Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm depicting the Lord’s crucifixion. The Messiah is seen at His lowest point, “a worm” (v6). Psalm 23 is an Imprecatory (Messianic) Psalm depicting the Lord as a Shepherd. The Suffering Savior of Psalm 22 rises from a sacrificial lamb (John 1:29) to the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) in Psalm 23. Finally, Psalm 24 is a Pilgrimage (Messianic) Psalm depicting the Living Shepherd ascending to His Throne. Jesus ascends to His holy place as the exalted, sovereign Lord (Acts 2:32-33; Ephesians 1:20-23). James Smith's Commentary on the Psalms calls this grouping “God as Savior (Psalm 22), God as Shepherd (Psalm 23), and God as Sovereign (Psalm 24).”

Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm. The ancients may not have recognized it as such, as the Jews of Jesus’ time are an example of those who didn’t seem to make the connection. Their idea of the Messiah was certainly not some victim, but rather a military king who would liberate them from their oppressors. Yet, many of the things written cannot be applied to a man of the sword, such as David, as he never experienced some of the details described within this psalm. Despite the misunderstandings, Jesus clearly made application of and connection with this psalm to His suffering. All would eventually learn that, indeed, He was the promised Redeemer (Acts 2:36, 4:10).

This psalm is classified as a Messianic Psalm because it has within it no less than nine fulfilled messianic prophecies: 22:1 - Jesus speaking the first line of this psalm (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). 22:8 - the words of His enemies foretold (Matthew 27:43). 22:15 - His thirst (Matthew 27:48). 22:16 - His hands and feet pierced (John 20:25). 22:18 - His garments divided (Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24). 22:22 - His praising God in the midst of the assembly (Hebrews 2:12).

The Chiastic structure of Psalm 22 is a simple pivot chiasmus. There are many perspectives offered on the structure of the psalm. One commentator suggested this pattern: “(A) A cry for help; (B) What the Lord sees, hears and feels from cross; (C) Resurrection and praise!” another lays it out as: “(A) Praises; (B) Insults; (C) Do be far from me; and (D) Sufferings.” Below, we have included two summary chiasmus suggestions from other sources concerning its poetic layout. From all of these, it should be apparent that opinions vary as to how the poem was originally structured - only the inspired penman truly knew. For the purposes of this course, we will use the chiasmus of Example B as our structure for the exposition of the text. David seems to be (A) Praying or crying out to God, then he (B) Appeals for deliverance; with His prayer heard, he (C) Praises God.

Simple Chiasmus Summary (Example A):

- [A]** 1-6 you are the glory of Israel
- [B]** 7-9 All who see me mock me; they curl their lips and jeer; they shake their heads at me:
- [C]** 10-12 Do not stay far from me
- [X]** **13-19 Many bulls surround me; fierce bulls of Bashan encircle me.**
- [C’]** 20-22 But you, LORD, do not stay far off
- [B’]** 23-25 For God has not spurned or disdained the misery of this poor wretch
- [A’]** 26-32 I will offer praise in the great assembly

Simple Chiasmus Summary (Example B):

- [A]** **Prayer:** Despite being forsaken, I trust God (1-5)
- [B]** **Prayer:** Despite my situation, God is my God (6-10)
- [C]** **Prayer:** There is no one to help me (11-18)
- [X]** **Appeal: for help, deliverance, saved (19-21)**
- [C’]** **Praise:** All faithful, praise the Savior! (22-23)
- [B’]** **Praise:** Let all nations worship the King! (24-27)
- [A’]** **Praise:** Posterity will serve and proclaim Him! (28-31)

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 22

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] 22:1 To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." a Psalm of David. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. 3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. 4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

a) "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

(1) The psalmist begins with a tormented and desperate cry out to God - a prayer stating he feels rejected by the Almighty. Jesus Christ spoke these same words in His most agonizing moment as He suffered on that cruel cross. Many have stated, "Jesus is quoting David." The reality is, in view of God's grand scheme of redemption, David was actually quoting Jesus through his inspired pen of prophecy.

(2) In ancient times, the Scriptures did not have the verses or chapters enumerated as we have in our modern Bible versions. Yet, when Jesus uttered these words from the cross, the people who heard Him speak would have immediately thought of this psalm, bringing to remembrance all that it said. Jesus was making application of Psalm 22 to Himself, fulfilling its prophecies.

b) "Why are you so far from helping me?"

(1) We must remember that Jesus has always been with God; He is God (John 1:1) and has never been apart from Him. But sin separates one from God (Isaiah 59:2). Since Jesus was taking on the sins of humanity, God must separate Himself from that sin. He cannot ignore it, meaning He must separate Himself from the Son. Jesus feels abandoned in His hour of anguish.

(2) The word "helping" in this verse is sometimes rendered "deliver, or deliverance," or "saving, or salvation." It is the Hebrew word, *YESHUA* (*H3444*) meaning "rescue, salvation, help, or deliverance." It is of the same root word as *YEHOSHUA* (*H3091*) which is the basis for the Anglicized names, Joshua and Jesus.

c) In the chiastic structure of this psalm, the first five lines (the "A" pairing) open with a pattern of prayer that will be contrasted with a pattern of praise. A plea for help (v1) is turned into an action of worship (v32). A cry of "You do not hear" (v2) is replaced with "He has done this" (v34).

[B] 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" 9 But You are He who took Me

out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.

a) "But I am a worm, and no man"

(1) Feeling forsaken, the suffering servant considers himself to be less than human, nothing more than an insignificant, defenseless creature of the earth. At the same time, similar words of humiliation and ridicule were being hurled upon him by those standing nearby (Matthew 27:40-41). Little did the mocking chief priests, scribes, elders, and those passing by realize they were playing a part in fulfilling the prophecy of this very psalm with each insult.

(2) "Worm" is the Hebrew word *TOLA* (*H8438*), a specific species of worm, the species "coccus ilicis," (or *Kermes vermilio*), known as the scarlet worm. While seemingly insignificant, this little invertebrate was the key source for the precious dye color called "crimson" in ancient times. The word "crimson" itself originated from an ancient Sanskrit word meaning "worm-made."

(3) The reader of this psalm would have easily understood the metaphor. The scarlet worm has to die first before it has value to humans. Its color cannot be extracted without its death. Likewise, the Messiah must die before His true purpose and value can be utilized. His crimson blood must be "extracted" first so that man could benefit from His sacrifice, providing priceless salvation to all of man.

b) The poetic chiasmus emphasizes "You have been my God" (v10) with the psalmist recognizing that despite his situation, God is still his God (vv 6-10). Therefore, let all the assembly worship Him (vv 25-27)!

[C] 22:11 Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. 12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

a) "Many bulls ... dogs have surrounded me"

(1) The words surrounded and encircled are the prominent theme of this pericope. The suffering servant feels his enemies closing in on him. The bulls, lions, and dogs are figurative speech for the types of opponents desiring his demise.

(2) Note how this C stanza presents the idea of being surrounded and encircled by his enemies, while the parallel C' strophe presents being surrounded "In the midst of the assembly" (v25). These two paralleling sections encircle the axis of the poem and the servant's cry at the center of the chiasmus. The structure of the psalm itself illustrates being surrounded.

- b) "My bones are out of joint ... they pierce my hands and feet"
 - (1) Execution by crucifixion first appeared around the sixth century BC with the Persians. The Romans didn't begin to perfect the method until the late third century BC. Yet, the physical descriptions that are written here some 900 years before Christ was crucified are incredibly precise and accurate! Crucifixion was an execution designed to deliver the maximum amount of pain and suffering to the victim before he succumbed.
 - (2) Jesus' hands and feet were pierced by nails at the crucifixion (John 20:25-27; Colossians 2:14). The awkward position of the arms and feet made it difficult to breathe, causing one's joints to displace, and using up what strength was left in the individual. Such prolonged agony would certainly cause one to exclaim, "You have brought Me to the dust of death."
- c) "They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."
 - (1) All four Gospel accounts recount the events of the crucifixion of Jesus and mention this particular event (Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; Mark 15:24; John 19:24). Matthew states plainly, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." He was referring to this psalm.

[X] 22:19 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

- a) "O LORD ... hasten to help Me! Deliver Me ... Save Me!"
 - (1) Verses 19-21 present the pivot point of the composition, thus creating the Axis of the chiasmus. The psalmist moves from a lamenting prayer to acknowledgment of "You have answered me" (v21). Being heard pivots his anguish and prayer to that of praise and worship.
 - (2) This stanza is contrasted with verse 11, "For there is none to help." It is then punctuated with repeated pleas for help, deliverance, and salvation. The suffering servant's feelings of being abandoned (v1) do not stop him from pleading to be heard. At last, the servant is heard! Yahweh has responded. Thus, the mood changes in the following stanzas.

[C'] 22:22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. 23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

- a) "I will praise You"
 - (1) The remaining verses of the psalm shift to a more hopeful tone. The psalmist anticipates that He will be delivered, one way or another, from the situation. He expects, at that time, to give God praise in a public setting - the assembly. The imagery of these final verses is prophetic. It looks ahead to the time when the resurrected Christ will reign over His kingdom and sinful man will have the opportunity to be reconciled to God (Acts 2:22-41; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
- b) "You who fear the LORD"
 - (1) In the [C] pairing, the servant was surrounded by the "congregation of the wicked" (v16). In this pairing [C'], the servant is surrounded by an assembly of the faithful, the "offspring of Israel."

(2) The words “praise, worship, and fear” are repeated throughout the second half of the chiasmus. This serves as our indication as the structure of the composition: (ABC) The psalmist is praying to God for help, (X) His prayer is heard, thus, (CBA) He will now praise God in the assembly.

[B'] 22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. 25 My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. 26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! 27 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You.

a) “For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted”

(1) At the start, the psalmist had felt abandoned, especially in the midst of his affliction. But Yahweh had not turned His back on His suffering servant. He did not hide His face, nor ever leave Him. This stanza is the Antithetic Parallelism to the psalmist feeling like a “worm,” reproached, despised, and ridiculed.

(2) While, indeed, God had to separate Himself from the sin Jesus took on while He hung from the cross, it did not mean God ignored or had permanently forsaken His only begotten Son. He was fully aware of all that was happening. It had been foreordained (1 Peter 1:20).

[A'] 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations. 29 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. 30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, 31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this.

a) “The kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations”

(1) The psalm closes with an affirmation of victory. The Messiah has overcome death and is currently reigning over His kingdom. For David, and those who read this psalm before the advent of the Christ, it was a future kingdom. For Christians reading this psalm today, His kingdom has come and “a posterity shall serve Him,” which is the assembly, the church.

(2) His righteousness and that of God are, indeed, declared to “a people who will be born, That He has done this.” It is declared in the New Testament. It is there we learn that His disciples are commanded to recount His victory and the grand plan of redemption to the entire world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

PSALM 23

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psalm 23 is perhaps the most well-known and beloved psalm in the entire book. It's been called "The Pearl of the Psalms." Many people love to cite this psalm from memory, providing peace and solace. It is commonly read at funerals to bring comfort to those who are mourning. Yet, curiously, the psalm is not about death, it's about trusting in God! It is a beautiful description of the nature and character of Yahweh.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Lament, Imprecatory, & Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	

Psalm 23 is the second part of a grouping of psalms known as "The Cross, the Crook, and the Crown."

This second part of the trilogy connects the Cross (Psalm 22), with the Crook (Psalm 23), and the Crown (Psalm 24) of the Messiah. In this psalm, we now see the innocent, slaughtered lamb of Psalm 22 rise up to be the Good Shepherd. The connection with Jesus is easily made by when He identified Himself as God saying, "I am the Good Shepherd" in John 10:11.

Shepherds are unique in the vocation of animal husbandry. Their relationship with sheep is perfect imagery for the relationship that a spiritual leader has with those under his watch and care. Shepherds also carry unique tools in their trade: a rod and staff. The staff is sometimes called a "Crook" because of the uppermost curved part (explained in more detail during the exposition of the text).

Psalm 23 falls into multiple psalm categories. On one hand, it is a Psalm of Praise or Trust. Yet, it also has Lament and Imprecatory elements to it since David mentions trouble ("fearing no evil") and his enemies. In addition, one certainly cannot miss the Messianic references that are implied throughout this psalm. For more detailed information about psalm categories, see the "Interpretations Guidelines" section of the Introduction and "Chart 2 - The Classifications of the Psalms" in the Appendix.

The Chiastic Structure of Psalm 23 varies depending on how one views the composition. Some suggest that verse 4 serves as the axis or main emphasis. Others make only part of verse 4, "You are with me" as the axis. Still, other suggestions include an ABAB structure as the layout. Our suggestion is a Simple Pivot Chiasmus with verse 3c serving as the axis. Here is the psalm outlined in its chiasmus format:

[A] 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want;

[B] 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters;

[C] 3a He restores my soul;

[D] 3b He leads me in the paths of righteousness;

[X] **3c For His name's sake;**

[D'] 4a Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me;

[C'] 4b Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me;

[B'] 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over;

[A'] 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 19

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] **23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

a) "My Shepherd"

(1) Of all the descriptions of God, "shepherd" is one of the most often repeated. We see Him portrayed as a shepherd many times in the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. The reason for this term, and its repetition, is because it is the most comprehensive term for God. It is comprehensive because God is everything to the sheep. He is the sheep's guide, the sheep's physician, protector, feeder, etc.

(2) In John 10, Jesus is portrayed as the Good Shepherd, and God is called the Great Shepherd in 1 Peter 2:25 and the Guardian of our souls.

(a) David personalizes it by saying, "MY shepherd." Righteous people view God as their personal shepherd. The power is when we personalize it. That is why David's religion is so powerful, God was his shepherd. These are the words of a shepherd boy who understands and knows what God is for him, just as he was for his flock.

(b) This is the starting point for any valuable relationship: We begin with the Lord. Our relationships with friends, relatives, and co-workers begin with the Lord. Our ultimate worth and value are when we begin with the Lord.

b) "I shall not want."

- (1) This is a poetic way of saying, “I will never be in need.” A good shepherd is one who does not allow his sheep to want for anything. The reason David says this is because his Shepherd has supplied all for him.
- (2) In the psalm's poetic structure, this first line has its parallel in verse 6. To have no need is harmonious with having “goodness and mercy” in abundant supply while dwelling in the Lord’s house.

[B] 23:2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

- a) “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.”
 - (1) It’s only possible to get sheep to lie down when they are well-fed. They prefer to lie down in green pastures, implying ample food. This is such a beautiful way of illustrating a place of comfort! We are not talking about rocky cliff areas where the sheep could not find the necessary comfort and rest, but instead, a place that is lush and green.
- b) “ He leads me beside quiet waters.”
 - (1) Sheep will also not drink from rushing waters, as it makes them nervous. The shepherd has the responsibility of damming up a stream so the water will be still and they can drink. It is the imagery of always thinking about the welfare of the sheep. Ezekiel 34:14 applies to this same idea of green pastures and quiet waters. God is The Shepherd and contrasts Himself with the wicked shepherd.
- c) The parallel is verse 5 in what God does for David, providing abundant spiritual nourishment.

[C] 23:3a He restores my soul;

- a) Sheep often get lost and need to be brought back. David certainly understands this truth in his own life. Not only did he go and find straying sheep as a shepherd himself, but he, too, had wandered away from the fold of God. In many of the psalms he composed, especially Psalm 51, he acknowledges that he has sinned. This is the equivalent of a sheep going astray from the flock.
- b) This line parallels with verse 4b, “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” To be restored in one’s soul or have one’s life revived is certainly a form of comfort.

[D] 23:3b He leads me in the paths of righteousness

- a) The shepherd typically has several predetermined paths he uses. If the flock stays on those, they will get to where they need to go. So, the shepherd leads them on the right path. There is nothing here indicating that these are easy paths. For example, they may be rocky, curvy, and adjacent to cliffs, etc. In verse 4, he is in the “valley of the shadow of death.” That certainly does not sound like an easy path. But if the sheep will follow their shepherd, he will get them safely to their destination.
- b) Likewise, we are to follow where our Shepherd leads us, knowing the way may not be easy, but He will get us safely there. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 that the way is not easy (cf. Psa 119:105, Jer 10:23: “It is not in man to direct his steps”).

[X] 23:3c For His name's sake.

- a) Here is the central axis, or primary pivot point: We belong to God, and He wants to keep it that way. Everything in this psalm points to that fact. Sheep are the property of and in the care of the shepherd. He provides for, leads, and protects His sheep. It is all done “for His name’s sake.” It is a reference to His nature and character.
- b) Clarke’s Commentary states this, “To display the glory of his grace, and not on account of any merit in me. God’s motives of conduct towards the children of men are derived from the perfections and goodness of his own nature.”
- c) Before and after this line are mentions of paths or walking. Indeed, a faithful child of God must live his/her life “for His name’s sake.” We must allow Him to lead us in those paths of life (1 John 1:7).

[D’] 23:4a Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;

- a) The poetic imagery is of a valley of deep darkness. It is a way of describing a path filled with all sorts of terrors and dangers. Death is nearby. One false step, and off you go. Only the Lord can lead a person through the shadow of death or the valley. Only the Lord can lead us through death itself.
 - (1) In Psalm 139, David writes that “even in Sheol, God is there.” Peter says in Acts 2 that Jesus was not abandoned in Hades. God would come to lead Jesus out of the grave, and so He did!
 - (2) In like manner, notice that David says, “I walk *through* the valley.” Even in times of grief, one must not linger or stay in that dark season but instead move through it. One doesn’t “move on” from the loss of their loved one but rather moves forward in life. The greatest comfort one can find in times of grief is leaning on and trusting in God.

[C’] 23:4b For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

- a) “For You are with me”
 - (1) God’s presence overcomes the worst of all thoughts, from fear and anxiety, to whatever might be considered evil or harmful. With God as our Shepherd, we need not concern ourselves with worldly threats. We continue to trek through the dark valleys of life, knowing that God is with us. Remember the poem about footprints in the sand? There was only one set of footprints, even though two people were described in the poem. The implication was that God carries us during trials. Matthew 6:13 is a good reminder of God being with us and caring about us.
- b) “Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” (KJV)
 - (1) The rod was carried as an instrument of defense. It was able to smite any threat, such as a wolf or any kind of attacker. It was a ready weapon in time of need.
 - (2) The staff was an instrument of service used by the shepherd for the benefit of the sheep. It was typically a longer stick with a curve at the top, called a “crook.” It was used to reach out and go around a sheep’s neck. If one got caught in a crevice or such, the shepherd could pull out the sheep with his staff. It was also that which would prod the sheep to return to the fold and be used to measure or count. Thus, it was used for discipline and direction.

- c) Here, David poetically implies that God provided protection and comfort for him when he needed it most. He is ready to rescue or instill correction if needed. Likewise, the Lord will do the same for us. We have no need to be anxious about any worldly threat, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31), and His Word establishes correction in our lives (2 Timothy 3:17).

[B'] 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

- a) Many commentators begin to disagree at this point in the psalm. Some think the entire Psalm carries the idea of the shepherd, while others say we leave that in verse 4 and begin to talk about other things in verses 5-6. There are some analogies to the shepherd and sheep. Then again, the idea of a table may have nothing to do with the shepherd metaphor but simply describes God's provisions for His own.
- b) "He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies."
(1) There are two interpretations of this line:
(a) David is talking about security in the midst of trouble. With enemies all around, he sits there fully satisfied, or
(b) He is talking about a victory celebration where the enemies are present as captives.
(2) Sometimes, in the great banquet rooms of antiquity, the prisoners were brought in and placed in stocks while the victorious feasted. While locked up, the conquered enemy was gazed upon, being humbled and humiliated.
- c) "Thou hast anointed my head with oil." (KJV)
(1) Those who believe this is speaking of sheep say that oil is used for medicine. Oftentimes, a sheep would scar his head, or his ears would get caught on thickets, and the oil was used for medicinal purposes. Some shepherds note that the oil also keeps the bugs from getting in the eyes and ears. They say that the sheep can get infections from these bugs, and the oil keeps them away. So he applies the oil to keep them from danger.
(2) If this is talking about what God does for man - then it carries the idea that we have become someone whom God has anointed as His own. For example, whenever a king was selected, the prophet would pour oil over his head to symbolize the selection. Thus, here, the Psalmist could be talking about his being selected by God. Either interpretation makes sense.
- d) "My cup overflows."
(1) This is the idea of blessings in abundance. A person is happy to have a cup with a little in it sometimes, but here is one with a cup that is overflowing. The analogy that some make to the sheep is that a shepherd, in places where there was no running water, would have a cup from which the sheep would drink. They lapped the water up quickly, but there was always an abundance. A good New Testament application of this is found in Luke 6:38.

- e) In the poem's chiasmic structure, this verse perfectly parallels verse 2. In each phrase, the Great Shepherd provides nourishment in abundance.
- [A'] **23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.**
- a) Two concepts are drawn from this verse for those who belong to God:
- (1) "Goodness" carries the idea of good things - such as material blessings and prosperity.
 - (2) "Mercy" is a keyword in the Psalms (used 93 times). It is the Hebrew word *CHESED* (H2617) and is sometimes translated as "lovingkindness" in other places. This has to do with one's relationship with God; that His love is being shed in abundance upon the individual.
 - (3) These two things "Will surely follow me all the day of my life," meaning he does not have to worry about being shepherd-less one day.
- b) "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
- (1) Some commentators have found the idea of dwelling confusing. Yet, the concept seems to simply be that of permanent residence. The word "forever" is translated from two Hebrew words, *OREK YAMIM* (H753, H3117), which means on and on. The psalmist will always be satisfied and content in the presence of the Lord.
 - (2) The parallel to this verse returns us to the first line, "I shall not want." If one is a "member of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19), then indeed, goodness and mercy are supplied in abundance. Then, one day, we will be in the presence of our Creator, dwelling with Him forever.

PSALM 24

The Crown

This Psalm identifies the individual who will be accepted by God in worship. It has many similarities to Psalm 15. This psalm also completes the trilogy of poems called “The Cross, the Crook, and the Crown of the Messiah.” In the three, we have witnessed the innocent, slaughtered lamb of Psalm 22 rise up to become the Great Shepherd in Psalm 23. Now, He is crowned as Lord and King. Jesus, the Messiah, is identified as King of Kings and Lord of Lords in 1 Timothy 6:15 and Revelation 17:14, 19:16.

James Smith titles these three psalms as “God is Savior, God is Shepherd, and God is Sovereign (pp 243-247). Each viewpoint provides a beautifully poetic way of linking the three psalms together in this section of the book.

Penman:	David
Classification / Genre:	Pilgrimage, Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure:	Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:	1 Corinthians 10:26

Psalm 24 is written in an “antiphonic” style. Antiphonic incorporates a call-and-response interaction, either spoken or sung, between two parts of a choir. In this psalm, a series of questions are asked, and the reply is then given. Traditionally, it is believed that this psalm was chanted as the Ark of the Covenant ascended Mount Zion (cf. 2 Samuel 6:12-15; Psalm 132). This is derived from what Jewish historian Josephus recorded, that seven choirs and musicians proceeded before the Ark and recited these words while also celebrating the arrival of the king to Jerusalem.

Psalm 24 can be divided into three logical parts. The first part (vv 1-2) declares Yahweh as the Creator and owner of all the earth - He is the Almighty. In the second part (vv. 3-6), He then appoints one specific location on earth as His chosen dwelling place - a hill in Jerusalem. The last part envisions Him arriving at His Holy Hill, Zion, as King (vv. 7-10). The prophetic implications of this psalm to the Messiah are quite evident.

The poetic structure of Psalm 24 has been interpreted as both simple and complex. One suggestion divides the three parts of the poem into three separate, complex chiasmus pairings, such as an “AA BaaB CabCab” pattern. Another suggestion is a simple ABAB pairing (example “A” below). Yet, another suggestion is a combination of a simple pivot chiasmus with an additional pairing (example “B”). For this study, we will be using Example B as our outline for the exposition the text.

Poetic structure of Psalm 24 (Example A):

[A] 1b-2 For God founded it on the seas, established it over the rivers.

[B] 3-4 Who may go up the mountain of the LORD?

[A'] 5-6 They will receive blessings from the LORD, and justice from their saving God.

[B'] 7-10 Who is this king of glory? (24:8)

Suggested Complex Chiasmus structure of Psalm 24 (Example B):

[A1] 1-2 The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.

[B] 3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place?

[C] 4a He who has clean hands and a pure heart;

[X] 4b **He who has not lifted up soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully;**

[C'] 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

[B'] 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah;

[A2] 7-10 Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

[a] 8 Who is this King of glory?

[b] The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

[A2'] 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

[a'] 10 Who is this King of glory?

[b'] The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 24
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

PART ONE: GOD IS THE ALMIGHTY

[A1] 24:1 A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. 2 For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

- a) The Psalm beautifully begins by proclaiming God's complete sovereignty. God is the one who is the Creator and Sustainer of the earth, which vividly describes the magnitude of His power. This statement also immediately and conclusively eliminates any pride on our part for what we have accomplished.
- b) This verse is quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:26 to support the argument that all foods are clean.
- a) The Lord established the earth on a seemingly unstable element, the seas. Yet, with God's almighty power, it was a simple task (cf. Genesis 1:9-10; 2 Peter 3:5).

PART TWO: GOD HAS APPOINTED A PLACE

[B] 3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

- a) Since God is so great (vv. 1-2) only He can set the conditions for those who may approach Him. It would be foolish to believe that anyone may ascend to where God is and stand before His holy throne (cf. Isa 33:14-16).
- b) Today, only those who are cleansed by the blood of Christ can approach God in acceptable worship (cf. Hebrews 4:16; John 4:24; 1 Peter 2:5).
- c) In the poetic structure of the composition, the psalmist now poses a question after affirming Yahweh's sovereignty. The "hill of the Lord" is His appointed place where He dwells and one must come to worship Him. Who may do so? Who are the ones that may come into His presence? The parallel line to this verse is also the answer to the question, verse six, "This is Jacob." The next few lines provide a few caveats for who "Jacob" is.

[C] 24:4a He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

- a) The acceptable worshiper has the following traits:
 - (1) Clean hands - one who has conducted his life in accordance with God's word. This would involve kind treatment of others, honest business practices, etc. (cf. Psalm 26:6; Isaiah 1:15; 33:15; 1 Timothy 2:8).
 - (2) A pure heart - one who has not filled his mind and his life with thoughts and deeds that are evil and defiled. In Matthew 5:8, Jesus stated, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This provides our reasoning for the parallel line to this one. Verse 5 of this psalm perfectly mirrors what Jesus said in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5.

[X] 24:4b Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

- a) Here, we have the central axis of parts one and two of the composition. How does one have "a pure heart and clean hands"? By not lifting up his soul to idolatry. This describes one who has not engaged in the folly of idolatry or one who has not sworn falsely (cf. Col 3:9; Eph 4:25).
 - (1) Not sworn deceitfully - it includes not making promises that he/she has no intention of keeping. One who is not true to his word (cf. Matt 5:33-37; 23:16-22; Ex 20:7; Jas 5:12) does not have a pure heart! When one becomes a Christian, he makes a promise to God that he will be faithful to

Him and that Jesus will always be his Lord (cf. Rom 10:9-10). God expects us to be true to our confession (cf. 1 Tim 6:12).

- b) This axis, or focal point, is placed directly between the true characteristics of a child of God and the blessings that come from it. The negative element presented here provides a stark contrast to the positive mannerisms of the individual who may enter into the King's presence.

[C'] 24:5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

- a) What will the true worshiper receive from God? This verse describes two gifts:
 - (1) He will receive a blessing from the Lord, which means he will be God-approved and God-accepted. He can live his life with the assurance and confidence of knowing he is truly one of God's children.
 - (2) He will receive righteousness from the Lord. This means that he will be justified or forgiven of his sins by God. This justification will result in his most desired possession: God's salvation.
- b) As mentioned in verse 4a (chiasmus line "C"), which is the parallel line to this one (C'), this pairing perfectly mirrors what Jesus said in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:8.

[B'] 24:6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah

- a) This verse ends on a positive note, observing that there is an entire race of people who are chosen by Yahweh. It is they who are qualified to ascend the hill of the Lord because they seek the Lord. The prophet Isaiah said, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near." (cf. Isa 55:6). To seek God's face is to desire to be in His presence and have Him openly observe all that one is and has done. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be true in our culture today - but rather, it is more like the culture described in Judges 21:25.
- b) The use of the name "Jacob" here certainly means the nation of Israel, but probably also uses the name Jacob to draw upon the text of Genesis 32:22-32. It is where Jacob himself wrestled with God - seeking Him.
- c) "Selah." This musical technical term suggests stopping for a moment and reflecting upon what has been said. It also provides an obvious dividing point within the psalm. (See Chart - "Important Technical Terms in the Psalms" in the Appendix for more information).

PART THREE: GOD IS ARRIVING

[A2] 24:7 Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

- a) This last section is based heavily on the first six verses. As the king (and the Ark) arrive in the Holy City, it is imperative that all who dare approach the Lord and His Ark do so with the right kind of attitude.
- b) The text repeats the important phrase "King of glory" five times and identifies this king as the Lord. Thus, it may be to King David who is entering the city, but the call is not to honor him. It is to honor the one true King, the King of

Kings and Lord of Lords, Almighty Yahweh. It is the Lord who was exalted in verse one. It is the Lord again, who is being exalted in this line.

[a] 24:8a Who is this King of glory?

a) Here is one part of the antiphon: one side of the choir voices this question (8a), and then the second half of the choir answers with the following line, verse 8b.

[b] 24:8b The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.

a) One commentator stated, "The expression 'mighty in battle' is but a stronger form of God's title of 'warrior' first heard in the song of victory at the Red Sea in Exodus 15:3." (Kidner)

[A2'] 24:9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

a) Just as our modern songs often repeat the chorus over and over, here, the psalmist repeats the "chorus," which embodies the song's overall lyrical message.

[a'] 24:10a Who is this King of glory?

a) Again, the choir repeats the antiphonal part of the hymn. Repetition was for the sake of emphasis.

[b'] 24:10b The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

a) This psalm appropriately concludes with a beautiful moment of reflection. It is nothing short of incredible that this King of Glory would humble Himself to embrace humanity and to be embraced by them in return (Philippians 2:6-8)!

NOTE: We have moved ahead in our study of the text and omitted several psalms of the psalter. As we proceed with the course, it will not be possible to address every psalm of the book. Our objective is to equip students with sufficient tools, examples, and guidelines so that one will be capable of interpreting any of the Psalms not included in this course for themselves. The next several psalms we have included have been selected for their notability and/or to provide clarification concerning doctrinal matters.

PSALM 34

I Will Teach You the Fear of the LORD

This Psalm is a joyful song of wisdom and thanksgiving. It fully illustrates the gratitude one would have after securing a remarkable escape from one's enemies. According to the psalm's title, it is set during a time when David was a fugitive from Saul and went to the Philistine city of Gath. Those events are recorded in 1 Samuel 21 and 22. This Psalm was also significant to New Testament writers, who referenced it numerous times.

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Praise, Thanksgiving, Didactic
Poetic Device / Structure: Acrostic, Chiastic
Bible Citation / Reference: 1 Samuel 21,22; 1 Peter 3:10

Psalm 34 is primarily a Praise or Thanksgiving Psalm. In fact, one commentator groups Psalms 30-34 together under the title, "Expressing Gratitude to God," and this psalm specifically as "For Salvation" (James Smith, pp. 257-264). There are also elements of teaching in this psalm, making it a "Didactic Psalm." In the second half of the psalm (verses 12-23), David states, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

Psalm 34 is an example of an Acrostic Psalm. An acrostic is a poetic composition in which the first letter of a line (verse) spells out a word. Psalm 34 is what is known as a "regular acrostic," where each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet is set in order and begins one or more verses. Psalm 34 has two sets of 11 letters, and one additional letter (PE) in the final verse. All verses, except the last, begin with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It seems the primary purpose for using the acrostic device in the Psalms was to encourage learning and memorization. This was a common, popular device used in writing Hebrew poetry (Psalms 9, 10, 25, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145 also use an acrostic device).

As we study the text, it must be understood that the Hebrew syntax, or arrangement of the words, do not always line up precisely with how English sentences are arranged in our modern Bibles. Hence, much of the psalmist's creativity and beauty remains concealed within the translation. To help illustrate this point, a transliterated version of Psalm 34 is included in the Appendix. (See: "Study: Psalm 34 Transliterated Acrostic.") It is included in this study simply to give a sense of, or present the concept, of how the Hebrews would have viewed an acrostic psalm.

Psalm 34 forms an elegant and complex chiastic structure framed within an acrostic device. It contains several discernible parallelisms. Some are lessons concerning the differences between the tongues of the righteous and the wicked. For

this study, we will focus mainly on the acrostic structure. As we examine the text of the psalm, each Hebrew letter will be identified with its corresponding verse alongside the chiasmic structure of the composition.

A simple Pivot Chiasmus (framed within an Acrostic device) of Psalm 34:

[A] 1-3 My soul will glory in the LORD

[B] 4-5 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me.

[C] 6 This poor man *cried out*, and *the LORD heard* him

[D] 7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him

[E] 8-10 Taste and see that the LORD is good

[X] 11 **Come, I will teach you the fear of the LORD.**

[E'] 12-14 Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.

[D'] 15-16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil

[C'] 17-18 The righteous *cry out*, and *the LORD hears*

[B'] 19-20 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him.

[A'] 21-22 The LORD redeems the soul of his servants

*Graphic: Chiasmic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 34
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

[A] 34:1 **A Psalm of David When He Pretended Madness Before Abimelech, Who Drove Him Away, and He Departed. I will bless the LORD at all times;**

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.

a) This Psalm begins with an inscription that identifies the occasion for writing: "A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech who drove him away." The Biblical context for this event is found in 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

(1) Psalm 34 is one of fourteen Psalms linked to historical events (cf. notes on Psalm 3).

b) ALEF - I will **bless** (ABARAK) the LORD

(1) Beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, this beautiful verse lays the foundation for all of the words of thanksgiving that follow. David expresses his intention. He will praise (bless) Yahweh continually!

(2) Indeed, David believed that God should receive thanks at all times (or "at every time"). This thought becomes more powerful when we consider what David has experienced. This is an excellent example for God's people everywhere. We should find time to offer thanks regardless of external circumstances (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

c) BET - My soul shall make its boast **in the LORD** (BEYHWH)

(1) The first word in this line is only one word in Hebrew but requires two or three words for our English translations. It could be translated as, "In God (or in the Lord) my soul shall boast." The word begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "Bet." When added to a noun, which in this case is God's name, Yahweh (YHWH), it becomes a prepositional phrase, "in Yahweh." Furthermore, by placing the word at the beginning of the line adds emphasis to David's prayer. It is "in" the Lord, implying his faithful relationship to God. This same thought is echoed in Christianity. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**."

(2) David's humility was genuine, and he certainly would not presume to boast in himself. He understood that God desires a humble attitude in His children (cf. Psalm 51:17; 1 Peter 5:6). This same thought is paralleled in verse 18 in the description of a "contrite spirit."

(3) Perhaps, when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 11:30-33, he was recalling the words from this psalm.

d) GIMEL - Oh, **magnify**, (GADAL - H1431) the LORD

- (1) A word that begins with the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “Gimel,” is incorporated here to emphasize how David will “boast.” The Hebrew word *GADAL* (*H1431*) means “extolling, lifting up, or to make great” - it is what David intends to do with the name of God. David is acknowledging Yahweh’s sovereignty and teaching others about Him by the words of this psalm.
- (2) “Let us exalt His name ...” This is one of many calls of David for others to join him in this Psalm of Thanksgiving. Indeed, God’s people enjoy worshiping together. Those who humbly serve Yahweh will appreciate this selfless attitude of David.

[B] 34:4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.

e) DALET - I ***sought*** (*DARASH* - *H1875*) the LORD

- (1) As David invites others to worship with him, he gives his reason for wanting to worship. He also implies that his reasons can be the reasons others exalt Yahweh.

f) HE - ***They looked*** to Him and were radiant

- (1) It appears that things were looking bleak for the people, but God justified their faith in Him by delivering them. Their radiant faces clearly show the joy they felt having been delivered. It is a Biblical truth that when one places his confidence in God, he will not be ashamed (or disappointed). (See Romans 1:16, 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6).
- (2) The fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “He” initiates this line of the composition. The word used is a verb meaning “to look or regard” (*NABAT* - *H5027*). It encompasses everything from a simple glimpse (1 Samuel 17:42) to regarding (1 Samuel 16:7), considering (Isaiah 22:8), and careful contemplation (Isaiah 5:12). In this verse, the word is written in a conjugated verb form (third person plural, perfect tense) which incorporates the letter “He” at the beginning.

- g) This verse serves as an excellent example of the difficulty English speakers face in recognizing and identifying the various nuances of Hebrew poetry. Translating from Hebrew to English loses subtle distinctions of the poetry because an equivalent wording may not exist between the two languages. In this case, Hebrew verb conjugations are very different from English, so translating the poetic structure of an acrostic directly into English is virtually impossible to do.

(1) For this reason, we will not attempt to identify every word or its form in the acrostic. Explaining each word configuration would require a great deal of time. Where a simple, identifiable Hebrew equivalent is found, we will include the word and its Strong's Concordance number.

(2) A transliterated version of the Psalm 34 in its acrostic form is included in the Appendix.

[C] 34:6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

h) ZAYIN - **This** (ZEH - H2088) poor man cried out

(1) The acrostic letter that appears here in the composition is "Zayin," although the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet is "Vav" (or, Waw). David leaves out "Vav" but adds an extra letter at the end of the psalm to maintain the balance of 22 letters.

(2) Beginning here and continuing through verse 10, we have a personal declaration of thanks to God for one's deliverance. Imagine David - here, describing himself as the "poor man" - having to act like a madman to save his own life (see the title). Yet God saved him from these troubles.

[D] 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.

i) CHET - The angel of the LORD **encamps** (CHANAH - H2583) all around

(1) The "angel of the Lord" is a term often used in the Old Testament to refer to God Himself (cf. Genesis 16:7ff; Exodus 3:1ff). Thus, God is seen as providing a protective barrier around His children (as seen with Elisha and his servant in 2 Kings 6:15ff).

(2) In these following sections [D and E], the psalmist shifts from recounting his personal experience to instructing his audience. He desires the reader to grasp the thought of trusting in God, just as he has in his life. If the reader will do so, then they can also partake in the same protection and deliverance that David has experienced. There are two prevailing thoughts here:

(a) Those who fear the Lord are protected by the angel of the Lord.

(b) Those who fear the Lord lack nothing.

[E] 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.

j) TET - Oh, **taste** (*TA'AM - H2938*) and see that the LORD is good

(1) The challenge is issued to give God an opportunity to prove that He is, in fact, good. His goodness is seen in that when one looks to Him for refuge, He will not disappoint him. It is worth noting that one must “taste and see” God’s goodness.

(a) The word “taste” in the Scripture never means a small sampling. It describes a full involvement (cf. Heb 6:5; 1 Pet 3:3). Many have given God only one chance for Him to do something that they want, and when it does not happen when or how or to the degree they’ve asked, they immediately give up on God. This is not “tasting” (it is more like testing!).

k) YOD - Oh, **fear** (*YARE - H3372a*) the LORD, you His saints!

(1) As in so many passages of Scripture, the call of the spiritual is to fear God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Fear is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). Jesus taught it (Matt 10:28). Fear leads to proper behavior and proper behavior ultimately will leave God’s saints (holy ones) lacking nothing.

l) KAF - The **young lions** (*KEPHIR - H3715*) lack and suffer hunger

(1) Some of the lesser of God’s creatures, including lions, may endure hardships but the crowning act of God’s creation, man, is given God’s attention. Yet David knows that all mankind does not enjoy God’s providential care. That care is devoted to those who seek the Lord.

(2) Paul reminds us that those who love the Lord, and are called according to His purpose and will not be separated from God’s love (Romans 8:28,39).

(3) “Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing” is reminiscent of Psalm 23:1, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

[X] 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

m) LAMED - **Come**, you children, listen to me

(1) David has learned valuable lessons in his own life by fearing God. Now, he wants the audience (“children”) to come so he can teach them that same valuable lesson. The word “children” is often used by Bible penmen as a term of endearment, such as saying “loved ones.” It is a means of being more personable with those who listen to him.

- n) We have identified this verse as the Central Axis or pivot point of the poetic structure.
- (1) On either side of this Axis, the words “good” are used in the parallelism. God is good and man should do good things. Indeed, learning the source of goodness and then putting it into practice is what David might incorporate in “teaching you the fear of the LORD.”
 - (2) In verses 11 to 14, David continues to instruct. Remembering the context of the Psalm (1 Samuel 21:13), David had lied because he was afraid of what Abimelech might do to him. Here, David’s focus of instruction is on fearing Yahweh. The fear of the Lord leads us to speak (words) and do (actions) things that are pleasing to God.

[E’] 34:12 Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

- o) MEM - **Who** (*MIY - H3410*) is the man who desires life ...?
- (1) David knows that true living is found only in God. It is natural for people to want to have long lives in which they see good. Yet this will only come about by following the admonitions of the following verses.
 - (2) Verses 12-16 are quoted by Peter in 1 Peter 3:10-12 to help teach that Christians must have “compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, and courteous” (3:8-9). In doing so, he says, “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” (1 Peter 3:13)
- p) NUN - **Keep** (*NATSAR - H5341*) your tongue from evil
- (1) James warns us of the dangers of the tongue (James 3:8; 1:26). Jesus was one who was able to observe this principle (1 Peter 2:22) even though He had the power and authority to curse His persecutors.
- q) SAMECH - **Depart** (*SUR - H5493*) from evil and do good
- (1) This is spirituality stated in its purest form. The spiritual person focuses on two fundamental concepts: departing from evil and doing good.
 - (2) In Romans 12:9, the Apostle Paul teaches this same fundamental principle. It is also similar to the admonition Paul gives to Timothy, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:11)

(3) In addition, just as David encourages the people of his time, today, Christians are to seek peace (cf. Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14).

r) In summary, one might ask, “What does it mean to fear the Lord?” David gives an answer:

(1) Keep your tongue from lies and evil,

(2) Turn away from evil and seek good,

(3) Pursue peace with all men.

[D'] 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

s) AYIN - The eyes (*AYIN - H5869*) of the LORD are on the righteous

(1) Special attention is given to the child of God. It is he/she who enjoys the blessing of having the watchful eyes and listening ears of God upon them. It is always comforting to the righteous to know that God is fully aware of all that his children are going through and that their prayers are reaching His throne (cf. 1 John 5:14-15).

t) PE - The face (*PANEH - H6440*) of the LORD is against those who do evil

(1) The word “face” is often used in Scripture to describe one’s interest and involvement. God’s interest in the evildoer is only in punishment, not in blessings (cf. Isa 59:1-2).

[C'] 34:17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

u) TSADE - The righteous cry out (*TSA'AQ - H6817*)

(1) The fact that the righteous are crying shows they were not spared pain or suffering (2 Timothy 3:12). True comfort only comes from knowing that God hears his children’s cries and will deliver them out of their troubles. Passages like this remind us that the promises of deliverance are always true eternally, but not temporally (for example, Lazarus was not delivered from his troubles in this life—Luke 16).

(2) More of the poetic structure of this psalm is identifiable through the Hebrew parallelism seen between verse 6 and this verse. In both instances, David cries out to Yahweh and is heard.

v) QOF - The LORD is near (QAROB - H7138) to those who have a broken heart

- (1) The brokenhearted are those who have endured some terrible loss, perhaps a loved one. It is comforting to know that such loss was not indicative of God's absence. Thus, David assures us that even in some tragic event, God is always near. The salvation promised here seems to be from the prolonged sadness that comes from enduring this loss. The simple truth is, God can mend every broken heart, if we trust in Him.

[B'] 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all. 20 He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken.

w) RESH - Many (RAB - H7227a) are the afflictions of the righteous

- (1) Verse 19 reminds us we live in a fallen and broken world. Until Christ's return, "afflictions of the righteous" will continue. Because this is Satan's world, his workers are busy inflicting the righteous with many sufferings. Yet God is also active in providing deliverance.

- (2) Notice the parallel thoughts of the composition between this line and verse 4. The emphasis is upon deliverance - a word that "often indicated the power of one entity overcoming the power of another. It was frequently expressed as deliverance from the hand (i.e., power) of another" (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

x) SHIN - He guards (SHAMAR - H8104) all his bones

- (1) Even the bones of the righteous are protected by God (again stating a general principle, since many of God's children have sustained injury).
- (2) This verse has a messianic implication within it. Jesus, who is our righteousness, suffered "many afflictions." In John's Gospel he records the fulfillment of the prophecy in this psalm: "Not one of his bones will be broken" (19:36).

[A'] 34:21 Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. 22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

y) TAV - Evil shall slay the wicked

- (1) David understands that it is a part of God's design that evil people will eventually destroy themselves. It is also part of Yahweh's plan that those who hate His children will face Him in judgment and be eternally condemned. Meanwhile, the Christian is thankful for the promise made in Romans 8:1.

z) PE - The LORD **redeems** (*PADAH - H6299*) the souls of His servants

(1) “Tav” (Taw) is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but the letter “Pe” is repeated here because David omitted “Vav” in verse 6. By repeating this letter, it maintains the 22 letters that constitute the Hebrew alphabet.

(2) While David probably considered the Lord’s redemption in a temporal sense (soul meaning one’s life), he was still addressing a great New Testament truth: God is our redeemer. It is He, and He alone, who can and will save His elect. David also acknowledges that none of the righteous, those who take refuge in God, will see God’s condemnation.

(3) We might consider this psalm as David's “Gospel” in the Old Testament. Its message is that those who trust in the Lord will be redeemed, while the wicked (whose trust is in themselves) will be condemned. It is the fear of the Lord and obedience to His will that leads to one’s deliverance. Then, one can enjoy the loving protection and guidance that Yahweh provides because His eyes are always upon His faithful servants and He hears their prayers!

PSALM 35

Fight Against Those Who Fight Against Me

This Psalm is immediately relatable to anyone who has ever experienced mistreatment, betrayal, or personal attacks. It gives hope to those who serve God that He will vindicate His faithful servants. It provides comfort and assurance to His children that He will rescue them. Therefore, one must continue in faithful endurance.

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Imprecatory / Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure: Alternate Complex Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: John 15:25

Psalm 35 is titled, “A Psalm of David.” However, it is difficult to assign this psalm specifically to any particular period of David’s life. The verbiage of verse 1 is similar to what David said to Saul in 1 Samuel 24:15, “Let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.” Therefore, it may be linked to the period of David’s life when Saul pursued him.

Psalm 35 is another example of an Imprecatory Psalm. As one studies through the book of Psalms, the Imprecatory Psalms become increasingly more intense. For example, Psalm 7 is often considered the mildest of the “avenge psalms,” while Psalm 109, with its count of at least 30 curses, showcases this escalating fervor. Here in Psalm 35, in quite strong terms, David implores Yahweh to defeat and destroy the enemies of His people.

Psalm 35 also has many Messianic/Royal aspects that remind us of the attacks upon Christ. The first scene is persecution without cause by many enemies but ends with anticipation of deliverance (Matthew 12:14-21). Interestingly, the role of Judas is insinuated in verses 8 and 10 by a switch to the singular “his/him.” The second scene identifies the false witnesses and their betrayal of the Christ but again ends with anticipation of deliverance (Matthew 26:59-64). The third scene repeats the pattern of the first.

Psalm 35 is written with a complex poetic structure and can be rather subjective to the reader. However, it still exhibits a chiasmus pattern through its many parallelisms and an easily identifiable framework is seen in an alternating ABAB pattern, as we have included below. It can also be easily divided into three sections, or scenes, with each one having a Lament, a Petition, and a Final Vow. A suggested outline of the scenes is:

- I. Threats to David’s life (vss. 1-10).
- II. The opposition (vss. 11-18).

III. The false accusations (vss. 19-28).

Summary form of the Complex Chiasmus of Psalm 35:

[A] 1-8 Persecuted without cause

[B] 9-10 Deliverance anticipated

[a] 11-12 Fierce witnesses rise up

[b1] 13 I humbled myself with fasting

[b1'] 13b-14 my prayer would return to my own heart

[a'] 15-16 Attackers gathered

[b2] 17 Rescue me from their destructions

[b2'] 18 I will praise You among many people

[A'] 19-26 Persecuted without cause

[B'] 27-28 Deliverance anticipated

SCENE ONE: THREATS TO DAVID'S LIFE (1-10)

[A] 35:1-8 A Psalm of David. Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. 3 Also draw out the spear, and stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation." 4 Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor Who seek after my life; Let those be turned back and brought to confusion Who plot my hurt. 5 Let them be like chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD pursue them. 7 For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, Which they have dug without cause for my life. 8 Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, and let his net that he has hidden catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.

- a) David views God as a great warrior who will arise to contend against the enemy on his behalf. God has always promised to take care of His children - especially the oppressed. God has long predicted opposition to those who try to be faithful (cf. 2 Tim 3:12).
- b) “Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Also draw out the spear”
- (1) The buckler (cf. Psalm 3:3) was a well-known part of the ancient armor, specifically designed to combat such weapons as the sword, spear and arrow. This type of smaller shield was usually made of tough and thick animal skins or perhaps even wood and were fastened to the left arm for quick movement (cf. 1 Kgs. 10:17). The main shield was a larger shield designed to protect the whole body (cf. 1 Kgs. 10:16).
- (2) David appeals to God to take serious action - using serious weapons against those who oppose him.
- c) “Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor ... Let them be like chaff”
- (1) This verse more explicitly illustrates the nature of imprecation. David does not indicate personal vindictiveness. He is being persecuted because of his righteousness and wishes for God to intervene on his behalf because of this.
- (2) Perhaps David reflected upon what God had inspired in Psalm 1:4: “The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”
- (3) Notice how David wishes for the punishment to come from the angel of the Lord, indicating that he does not think it his place to personally attack his persecutors.
- d) “For without cause they have ...”
- (1) David clearly expresses his desire for God’s involvement - they are persecuting him without cause. When this happens to us, we follow in the steps of Christ (1 Peter 2:19ff).
- e) “Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly”
- (1) God has continually assured His children that He will repay one’s enemies (cf. Romans 12:19-20; Hebrews 10:30). He has also said that in the final judgment, there will be a sudden destruction (1 Thessalonians 5:3). David would much rather the enemy turn into a friend. He does not desire the ultimate destruction of others. Yet, if they choose to persist in their

wickedness, then David's will blends with that of the Lord. They will receive the payment for their life choice (cf. Rom 6:23).

(2) This verse is a type and shadow of Judas' actions as betrayer (cf. Acts 1:16-25; Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8-15)

f) This entire section has its parallel in verses 19-26, with the thought of "Persecuted without cause."

[B] 35:9-10 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation. 10 All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?"

a) David will not yield. He will remain steadfast in the Lord and in His Salvation. He anticipates being rescued from his enemies. He is confident in the Lord's help!

b) Why is he so confident? It is seen in David's question, "LORD, who is like You?" This explains why David is pleading with God so passionately. His enemy is stronger than he - but he knows that God is much stronger than the enemy (cf. Exodus 15:11).

c) Lessons drawn from Scene One (vss. 1-10):

(1) God's faithful do and will suffer (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12).

(2) God's faithful can call upon Him for justice rather than assume to enact justice themselves.

(3) Discouragement is a continual foe for God's people.

SCENE TWO: THE OPPOSITION (11-19)

[a] 35:11 Fierce witnesses rise up; They ask me things that I do not know. 12 They reward me evil for good, To the sorrow of my soul.

a) Verses 11 through 18 form an inner structure within the larger framework of the poetic composition. An ABA'B' pattern can be identified among the psalm's parallelisms, but these few verses expound upon the thought of the first pairing (the A and B pair, verses 1-8 and 9-10).

b) David's innocence is seen in that he is completely unaware of what he is being accused of. He knows nothing of the charges. Equally, David knows that the witnesses are malicious, wanting to destroy David without just cause (cf. Psa 27:12).

- c) We can easily assume that David has tried to do what is right - but it has not worked (cf. John 10:32; Romans 12:17,21).

[b1] 35:13a But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting;

- a) On the other hand, David has not repaid evil for evil, which is what most worldly people do. He did not rejoice at their misfortune but genuinely mourned with sackcloth and with fasting. When he prays on their behalf, he does not then forget about their misfortune. His concern for them returns again and again - thus making him incapable of thinking about anything else.
- b) This demonstrates a genuine and heartfelt concern for others, even one's enemies (cf. Matt 5:44). One should keep these verses in mind when criticizing the authors of the Imprecatory Psalms for their insensitivity and cruelty.

[b1'] 35:13b-14 And my prayer would return to my own heart. 14 I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.

- a) David cared for their sickness as much as he did for his own mother's death. His prayers and concerns for his enemies were as intense and genuine as those for his closest companions.
- b) Notice David's posture. It is inward. He bowed and prayed quietly with his head to his chest. Compare this verse to the parallelism seen in verse 18, the [b2'] pairing.

[a'] 35:15 But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, And I did not know it; They tore at me and did not cease; 16 With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth.

- c) David had prayed for them when they were down and out. Now that the tables are reversed, do they do the same for David? No, not at all. Instead of quiet, prayerful sorrow, they rejoice!
- d) The Hebrew verbiage in this verse is difficult to understand, probably because it contains an ancient expression unknown to modern translators. In its Hebrew form, the first line reads literally, "Like mockers of a cake," and thus, at face value, means little to the modern mind. Yet, the overall meaning is quite clear. These enemies of David are debased and completely insensitive. Just how much they hated David is seen in the last line with the gnashing of teeth (cf. Stephen, Acts 7:54).

[b2] 35:17 Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, My precious life from the lions.

- a) Sometimes (many times?), we must exercise patience when God seems to be slow to act (cf. 2 Peter 3:9). Even the souls that had been martyred “for the word of God and for the testimony which they held,” asked a similar question in Revelation 6, as David. “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ” (Revelation 6:9-10)

[b2'] 35:18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.

- a) No matter the answer, whether sooner or later, positive or negative, David will still rejoice in the Lord. His personal struggles do not distract him from public worship nor from publicly proclaiming his God. To understand more about the Thanksgiving Offering, study Leviticus 3.
- b) In the poetic structure of the psalm, look at how David’s posture has changed. It is now outward, giving thanks and praise publicly. In verses 13b-14, it was inward as he bowed and prayed quietly. Here, we have the antithetical parallelism (contrast) to that posture.
- c) Lessons drawn from Scene Two (vss. 11-18):
- (1) The truly spiritual person always keeps things in proper perspective and prays for others’ souls, even the souls of their enemies!
 - (2) One should not anticipate justice in this life but should maintain confidence that God will ultimately make it right (vss. 17-18).

SCENE THREE: FALSE ACCUSATIONS (19-28)

[A'] 35:19 Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause. 20 For they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful matters Against the quiet ones in the land. 21 They also opened their mouth wide against me, and said, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it." 22 This You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. 23 Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, To my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; And let them not rejoice over me. 25 Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah, so we would have it!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up." 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who rejoice at my hurt; Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor Who exalt themselves against me.

- d) “Let them not rejoice ... who hate me without a cause”

- (1) David wishes that God would intervene and stop the malicious behavior of his enemies.
 - (2) There will always be those who have no integrity and fight against others unjustly. They do not wish for peace (well-being and prosperity). Instead they disrupt that peace by using the power of words against the quiet (those who are minding their own business, just trying to get along).
 - (3) The enemies have either seen his supposed wrong or they are just gloating over his problems.
 - (4) This verse was fulfilled by those who hated Christ in John 15:25, "But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'"
- e) "This You have seen, O LORD"
- (1) The enemies may not have seen anything, but God has seen it all. Therefore, David cries for Him to act. The truly spiritual are always aware of God's presence - and they welcome it. David does not want God to be far from him.
 - (2) Just as a child would call upon his father to come to his aid, David calls upon his God to defend him. This verse also begins a lengthy series of requests - many of which fall into the "imprecatory" category discussed above. Our cause, like David's, will be taken care of in due time (cf. 1 Pet 5:6).
 - (a) David's crucial appeal is seen in verse 24. He does not expect God to act because David is worthy. Instead, his appeal is based upon the promise of God - His divine righteousness which provides aid to His children. Indeed, God blesses those who put their trust in Him. He does not expect perfection from His obedient children in order for Him to act on their behalf.
 - (b) David wants God to close their mouths from claiming victory over him and gloating over him. He does not want them to sing the song of victory.
 - (c) David requests that God make them:
 - i) Ashamed,
 - ii) Humiliated,
 - iii) Clothed with shame and
 - iv) Dishonored.

(d) Clearly all of these reveal what David feels would be just and appropriate punishments for these individuals. He wants their pride removed (in order for them to humbly come to God?).

[B'] 35:27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." 28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long.

- a) David's friends (other righteous people) have not had much to cheer about lately. David knows, however, that if God would punish the enemies, then his friends would shout for joy. Such vindication would be clearly seen if the enemies received the prescribed punishments of the previous verses. When those punishments are meted out, then the righteous friends will glorify God, because God does care and desire good for His servants.
- (1) Rescue and retribution are anticipated here as the psalmist prepares to praise His God.
 - (2) David will join with his friends in their praise of God and His righteousness. It will not be a simple, short song of praise. It will last all day long. This verse seems to indicate that David has full confidence the deliverance will come.
- b) Lessons drawn from Scene Three (vss. 19-28):
- (1) The child of God must wait for the Lord to act (Rom 12:19-21).
 - (2) The child of God must believe that God desires the ultimate success of His children.
 - (3) The child of God will remain steadfast in his/her faith and continue to praise and worship God.

PSALM 46

Be Still, and Know That I Am God

This Psalm motivates us to hope and trust in God. It's fascinating to note that the most frequently given command in the Bible isn't to worship God alone (Exodus 20:3), nor is it to love Him with all your heart (Matthew 22:37). Instead, it is the recurring message of, "Do not fear. Do not be afraid." Thus, the psalmist implies that even if the earth crumbles beneath us or the mountains plunge into the sea, we will not be shaken; "we will not fear!" This psalm encourages the reader to know that the faithful belong to the city of God, a place that cannot be moved, destroyed, or undone. God dwells among us. He will be our help!

Penman: Sons of Korah
Classification / Genre: Praise / Pilgrimage
Poetic Device / Structure: Complex Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: 2 Chronicles 32:22?

Psalm 46 is our first psalm in Book II (Book II includes Psalms 41 to 72). This Psalm was selected for two reasons: (a) It was written by the sons of Korah; (b) it is a Psalm that seems to have been written during a time of a significant national crisis. It affords us an opportunity to look into how people of faith dealt with difficult times. One commentator stated that "Psalms 46-48 form a trilogy of praise, in which a wondrous deliverance of Jerusalem from foreign enemies is celebrated. All three are designated as psalms of the sons of Korah. They may allude to the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BC from the armies of Sennacherib." (James Smith, p 284). In the inscription, Psalm 46 has two specific attributes "For the Chief Musician" to note:

(1) It is "A Psalm of the Sons of Korah." These were the descendants of Kohath, one of the sons of Levi, according to Genesis 46:11. The writer of 1 Chronicles 6:22 states that the "sons of Kohath were Amminadab, Korah, and Assir." Korah was among those who led a rebellion of 250 men against Moses during the wilderness wandering (cf. Numbers 16). God punished the rebels, but "the children of Korah did not die" in the incident (Numbers 26:11). It seems that by David's time, they had become musicians and singers for worship in the temple (2 Chronicles 20:19).

(2) It is "A Song of Alamoth." This a feminine word that has been transliterated into English (*H5961*). It is a technical music term used to indicate a particular aspect of a psalm, such as its tune, its formal genre, type of instrument, or perhaps, set to a specific voice, like soprano, or a choir of girls. It was a product of the sons of Korah (1 Chronicles 15:20). (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Psalm 46 is both a Praise and Pilgrimage Psalm. God's faithful children proclaim three beautiful truths throughout the psalm: "We will not fear" (verse 2), "We will not be moved" (verse 5), and "We will be still" (verse 10). Thus, Yahweh is praised in His holy temple because "He is with us" (verses 7 and 11). The fact that this psalm is prescribed as a song of worship (To the Chief Musician) indicates that the Hebrews sang this psalm as a reminder of what God had done for them. That is characteristic of Pilgrimage type psalms (cf. Palm 132:1)

The poetic structure of Psalm 46 appears to be a complex chiasmus. The song begins and ends by praising God as "our refuge," while the center of the composition focuses on the power of His word over nature and the nations. In addition to the poetic device used to write the psalm, it can also be easily outlined as follows:

- I. God's power over nature (vss. 1-3).
- II. God's power over the nations (vss. 4-7).
- III. God's power over the warring world (vss. 8-11).

Suggested Complex Chiasmus for Psalm 46:

[A1] 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;

[B1] 2-5 We will not fear though the earth be removed;

(1.a) 2a Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed;

(1.b) 2b-3 The mountains carried in the midst of the sea;

(axis) 4a There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God;

(2.b) 4b-5a The holy place of tabernacle, God is in the midst of her;

(2.a) 5b She shall not be moved, for God will help her.

[C1] 6 Nations raged; kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice; the heart melted.

[X] 7 LORD of Hosts is with us, God of Jacob is our refuge;

[C2] 8-9 Behold the works of LORD; He makes wars cease; He breaks the bow;

[B2] 10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted!

[A2] 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 46
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

SECTION ONE: GOD'S POWER OVER NATURE (vss. 1-3).

[A] 46:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song for Alamoth. God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

- a) This Psalm is based on the confidence one has when one is God's child. It describes God in three ways, as:
- (1) **Refuge** - a sure, impenetrable defense. He is our shelter, a place of safety. This word illustrates how God will not allow outside enemies to defeat us (cf. John 10:28-29; Romans 8:37-39).
 - (2) **Strength** - the working of God in the inner man. When one has God's Word in his heart and is led by His Word, he has incredible strength (cf. Ephesians 3:16,20).
 - (3) **A present help** - describes the aid that God gives when we need it the most and the perfect timing of that aid. The Psalm says that help comes when we are in trouble (literally "tight places").
- b) One would, therefore, miss a key element of this verse if he failed to observe the availability of God to His people. He does not let His awesome power return void. He uses it for His people.
- c) It's interesting to note that this verse prompted Martin Luther to write his now well-known hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." It has been noted that when the famous Reformationist felt dismayed or overwhelmed, he would sing the 46th Psalm. Thus, this psalm has often been called, "Luther's Psalm."

[B] 46:2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

46:4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

- a) On the basis of verse 1, God's faithful child will not fear. This implies that, without God, one would have sufficient reason to be afraid, but not with God. God instills confidence even when catastrophic events such as the earth changing and the mountains slipping away should occur. The apocalyptic language in this psalm is typical for Jewish writers, who used this literary technique of exaggeration to express that any disaster is not sufficient to move God's child away from his faith and confidence.
- b) The thought of verse two continues by adding the roaring, troubled waters and the mountains quaking. Some commentators suggest that perhaps the people had recently endured a violent earthquake.
- c) In the psalm's poetic structure, verses 2-5 form several subsequent parallelisms that emphasize the thought that "we will not fear."
 - (1) The first pairing (v2a) and (v2b) present catastrophic events but are contrasted by (v4a) and (v5a) that God is present and always in complete control.
 - (2) In the middle of these two sets of parallelisms is the first part of verse 4, "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God." This serves of the axis of this inner chiasmus within the larger chiasmus (and why Psalm 46 is a Complex Chiasmus). This is a poetic reference to what God provides to His faithful. There was no river that flowed through Jerusalem. Instead, the Psalmist is describing the constant flow of blessings that God provides for His people.
 - (3) It is also noteworthy that attacking armies would often cut off a city's water supply, thereby forcing the people to either die of thirst or surrender. God, however, will not allow His people to suffer such a fate.
 - (4) For Christians, this reference alludes to the "pure river of water of life" (Revelation 22:1) and the "living water" (John 4:10-14) that Christ provides to His disciples. Indeed, in both cases, to have access to such a river will make the inhabitants of God's "city" glad!

SECTION TWO: GOD'S POWER OVER THE NATIONS (vss. 4-7).

- d) Verse 4 also creates a dividing mark within the psalm. The term “Selah” naturally implies a break in the composition. It is a term believed to mean to pause and reflect on what has been said. Perhaps, here, it meant a break in the musical flow of the song. (See “Chart 6 - Important Technical Terms in the Psalms” in the Appendix for more information). After the pause, the psalmist now contrasts the raging waters of verse 3 to God’s people enjoying the life-giving stream.
- e) With God in the midst of His city, she “shall not be moved.” This is undoubtedly the keyword in this Psalm, which occurs three times in verses 2-6 (*MOT - H4131*). In verse 2, it is the word “slip” or “fall,” and in verse 6, the word “tottered” or “shaken.” Indeed, with God, one has stability that nothing else can provide. One is able to see God’s deliverance as a new day dawns, perhaps after a difficult night when it appeared there would be no tomorrow, such as the events surrounding 2 Chronicles 32:22. The same terminology found in Exodus 14:27 - reflecting on the first great deliverance.

[C] 46:6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

- a) The nations may attempt to display their power but it is feeble when compared to the power of Almighty Yahweh. Just as God was able to speak the world into existence, He can equally speak it into oblivion (cf. 2 Peter 3:7). The nations are no match for such power!

[X] 46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

- a) Here, we have the central thought, or Axis of the song, “Yahweh is with us! He is our protection!” On either side of this verse (verses 6 and 8), the psalmist paints a picture of destruction - “the earth melted” and “desolations in the earth.” In the midst of such catastrophic events, the Psalmist emphasizes “refuge” for the people. God is, indeed, a safe haven for His faithful people.
- b) The word “hosts” (*TSABA - H6635*) is a typical Old Testament word meaning “armies.” God is over not just one army, but many. The expression can refer to earthly armies (1 Samuel 17:45) or angelic armies (1 Kings 22:19). The word refuge (or “stronghold”) here and in verse 11, is different from the word refuge in verse 1. This word means an inaccessible height or a high stronghold.

SECTION THREE: GOD’S POWER OVER THE WARRING WORLD (vss. 8-11).

[C’] 46:8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.

- a) Again, the term “Selah” naturally implies a break within the composition. The psalmist shifts to another aspect of God’s power - over a world at war. This gives a strong indication that the psalm might be referencing the events of God protecting Jerusalem from the invading armies of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in which he questioned, “In what do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem?” (2 Chronicles 32:10) Psalm 46 provides the answer to his question!
- b) This section begins with an invitation to come and observe God’s mighty power. Implied is that, upon observation, one will cease trying to fight against Him. When one sees God’s works and how He easily causes desolations (referring to the destruction of wicked nations?) one will not do that which will cause God to oppose him.
- c) James 4:1 notes that men fight to get what they want rather than what God wants. However, it is God’s will that men cease the evil-fighting. God will bring about this peaceful end by doing away with three noteworthy implements of war: the bow, the spear, and the chariot. It seems from verse 8 that God will use even violent measures to bring this peace. We know that in the judgment, God will bring about peace by destroying the world and punishing evil men (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-13).

[B’] 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

- a) This great verse encourages man to cease resisting God. God will be exalted, and it is a demonstration of wisdom to exalt Him now (cf. Philippians 2:11). Since God will be exalted, if one does not cease, he will be destroyed.
- b) Verse 2, “Therefore we will not fear, ” shows the natural parallel and result of being still and knowing God. Thus, the overall thought of hoping and trusting in God is carried throughout the entire song.

[A’] 46:11 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

- a) The Psalm concludes with the assurance that Almighty Yahweh is with His people. It is in this thought that the Psalm finds its rightful place as a Psalm of Praise. God’s people welcome His presence. And how do they welcome it? By humbly submitting to His power and authority. They know God will not be a stronghold for them if they are disobedient because those who are disobedient are not His people.

PSALM 51

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

This Psalm has to be one of the most beautifully heartfelt and moving prayers for forgiveness in all the Bible. We are given the privilege of looking into King David's heart and what he was thinking after being convicted of sin by Nathan the prophet (cf. 2 Samuel 12:1). It is about the restoration of a broken and contrite king. Indeed, he was a “man after God’s own heart.”

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Psalm of Lament / Didactic / Wisdom
Poetic Device / Structure: Complex Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: 2 Samuel 11-12; Romans 3:4

Psalm 51 has been the subject of much doctrinal error. This psalm was selected for this course because it not only affords the reader a better understanding about the seriousness of sin but also due to it having been abused in promoting a false doctrine about sin. We will Biblically expound upon the controversial passage and explain the historical, linguistic, and doctrinal implications that have caused so much religious confusion.

Psalm 51 is a penitential Psalm of Lament and also a Didactic Psalm. It is often considered a “repentance psalm” - a poetic composition pleading to Yahweh for forgiveness of sins (see also Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 103, 130, and 143). According to the superscription, this psalm was written “after Bathsheba.” The sad events of that occasion are recorded in 2 Samuel 11-12. Thus, we see the words of a penitent heart within the composition, giving it a classification of a Psalm of Lament. Yet, it also has a didactic element to it because we learn more about the mercy of God, and the psalmist states, “I will teach transgressors Your ways” (v13).

Psalm 51 has a complicated poetic structure. It contains many easy-to-identify Hebrew parallelisms, all enclosed within a dual chiasmus framework—meaning it has two axis points. The psalmist emphasizes two main thoughts: verses 4b and 13. God is a just judge, and because of His mercy, David will teach others the commandments of the Lord. Throughout the entire composition, “There is a deep sense of personal sin and an equally profound desire for forgiveness. The words ‘transgression,’ ‘iniquity,’ and ‘sin’ are contrasted with ‘blot out,’ ‘wash,’ and ‘cleanse.’ The penitent soul cries out with an intense convicted conscience.” (Wilson Adams, "The Psalms - Songs to Soothe the Soul." Vol 1. Pg 67).

Complex Chiasmus (Dual Chiasmus) of Psalm 51

[A1] 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to your lovingkindness ... multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions

[B1] 2a Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

[C1] 2b And cleanse me from my sin.

[D1] 3 I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is always before me.

[E1] 4a Against you have I sinned and done this evil

[X1] 4b **That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.**

[E1'] 5 My parents were sinful, and I am prone to sin
(paraphrased)

[D1'] 6b In hidden part, You will make me to know wisdom

[C1'] 7a Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

[B1'] 7b-8 Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness ...

[A1'] 9 Hide your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

[A2] 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

[B2] 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

[C2] 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

[X2] 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You;

[C2'] 14-15 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed , O God, The God of my salvation. My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
15 Open my lips, my mouth shall show Your praise.

[B2'] 16 You do not desire sacrifice, ... You do not delight in burnt offering.

[A2'] 17-19 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ... and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion ... Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, ...

[A1] 51:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David When Nathan the Prophet Went to Him, After He Had Gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

a) "A Psalm of David when ..."

(1) The tenor of this psalm certainly implies the thoughts of a remorseful heart - one that is convicted of godly sorrow and moved to repentance (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10). Even without the superscription, the reader can easily connect the words written here with the tragic and sinful events of David and Bathsheba's encounter. One can imagine this psalm being written after all the consequences were realized from those events, and now the emotions of the guilty one are laid out here on full display.

b) "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions."

(1) This helps us see that David immediately appeals to God's divine nature using terminology related to the cancellation of a debt or the wiping away of defilement. Something that is often lost in Christianity today is the deep sense of hurt and mourning that comes when a child of God has done wrong. Spiritual people take sin very seriously and do not quickly dismiss it when they know they are guilty!

(2) When one is overcome with a sense of wrongdoing, he/she realizes, at that point, one must approach God as a beggar asking Him for that which no one has the right to ask. It is not God's fault we have sinned. He does

not owe us forgiveness. Thus, we are all beggars before the throne of Almighty Yahweh.

[B1] 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

- a) How dirty does David feel? He feels filthy, contaminated, stained, and polluted. The Bible uses these words often to describe mankind's sinful nature. Because of this, David wants to be thoroughly washed from such degradation.

[C1] 51: And cleanse me from my sin.

- a) David is not concerned solely with the sin he has committed but with his sinful character. He is troubled by what he has done and why he has done it. He asks, "What has gotten inside me, encouraging me to do such a heinous thing as this?"
- b) This is why Jesus taught, in the Model Prayer, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13) We need God's strength to help us overcome temptation.

[D1] 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

- a) Here is a clear indication of what must happen in true repentance - one must first acknowledge one's transgression against God. There are things in this world that the world may not call a sin, but that doesn't make it true. There are also things the world says we "must" do, but that doesn't mean they are accepted by God. Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29) The throne of God is what matters most to our souls!
- b) It takes two to commit the sin of adultery, but here, David is not concerned about Bathsheba. He is focusing entirely upon his own sin. He could have offered excuses before God, such as, "She was the one bathing there in open view of everyone!" Yet, he did not do so or shift the blame to another. The fact of the matter is they both sinned and he must answer for his own sin (just as she must answer for hers). As a result, his conscious is always accusing him. This gives us a sense of the agony David is feeling during this low point of his life.

[E1] 51:4a Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—

- a) What happened to Uriah and Bathsheba? Did David not sin against them? While it is true that he sinned against them, David knows that all wrongdoing is ultimately against God. He knows that others were hurt, but ultimately, it is an offense against God and His commands. God is the one who commanded,

“You shall not commit adultery” in His law (Exodus 20:14). David understands that no sin is hidden from God’s sight (Numbers 32:23; Job 34:21; Jeremiah 16:17; Proverbs 15:3).

[X1] 51:4b That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

- a) David knows he is guilty of violating God’s law and knows he should get what he deserves. If God chooses to punish him, He is just in doing so. God will be blameless in the matter. Here, in his darkest hour, David is still bringing glory to God. By confessing his sin, he exalts God’s divine character, even while appealing for compassion when He renders justice. By doing so, David is proving that the law and commands of God are, indeed, good, perfect, reasonable, and just even if mortal man transgresses that law.
- b) This is one (of two) of the central points David emphasizes in the poetic structure of the composition - despite man’s sinful actions, Yahweh is a Just and Blameless Judge. Justice resides in His hands. This line is centered in the midst of repeated cries for mercy.
 - (1) It has been stated that Grace is “receiving that which one does not deserve.” Mercy is “*not* receiving that which one deserves.” David committed sin against God. Throughout God’s law, it states that sin must be punished (cf. Leviticus 16; Romans 6:23). Therefore, David *deserves* to be punished. He knows the seriousness of the law. “If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so, you shall put away the evil from Israel.” (Deuteronomy 22:22)
 - (2) This is why David repeatedly asks for mercy, because he knows he is deserving of punishment.

[E1’] 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

- c) “I was brought forth in iniquity”
- d) This is the extremely controversial verse of this Psalm. The wording of this line has produced a false doctrine that is many centuries old and has become widespread among religious groups. It is the false doctrine of “inherited sin,” also known as “original sin.” The doctrine postulates that every human being is born a sinner. According to that concept, when an individual enters the world, they are immediately guilty of sin and deserve punishment. However, this simply is not true. That is not what the Bible teaches! The following points provide a proper exegetical analysis of this passage:

(1) First, the false doctrine has been primarily the result of faulty translations of the Bible. Let's not forget that translators have the difficult task of interpreting ancient phrases and finding understandable equivalence between the original language and the target language. Unfortunately, they are also subject to external influences. Thus, all Bible translations have to be explained so that one does not think David is supporting the erroneous idea of inherited sin.

(a) Here are examples of how Bible translations render Verse 5:

i) "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (NIV)

ii) "I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful." (GNB)

(b) These renderings have resulted in many teaching and believing that people are sinful and evil from birth. This implies that there is no choice in the matter; one is evil, even as an unknowing baby. With this as their understanding, some teach that it is necessary to baptize children in order to "save them."

(c) However, the text itself does not support such a translation. The Hebrew text literally reads, "Behold, in (among, upon, with) iniquity (guilt, punishment, ruin)." The words that come first in the sentence are "Behold-in-iniquity," not "I was born in iniquity." "English translations regularly transpose this forlorn sound of desperation by placing the verb before it, as if David is concerned with his origin rather than his present state of being." (Skip Moen, Ph.D. Hebrew Word Study)

(2) Second, there is an overarching principle that must be applied here, based on Psalm 119:160, "The sum of Your word is truth ..." When considering what the Bible says about a topic in one verse, other verses that speak about the same subject must be taken into consideration. By looking at all verses concerning a particular subject, one can arrive at a more sound conclusion. If there are other verses that provide supplemental information to the topic, but those other verses are ignored in order to "validate" a thought or teaching, it is known as "proof-texting" (also, pretext). That is the case with this verse. There are several passages that demonstrate the error of the doctrine of "original sin":

(a) Ezekiel 18:20 - every individual is responsible only for his/her sin;

(b) 1 Timothy 2:4 - how could God desire all men to be saved when He has given them the burden of sin from birth?

- (c) Matthew 19:14 - would Jesus have said this about children if they inherited sin?
 - (d) Exodus 32:33 - only the one who sins will be blotted out.
 - (e) We might also note that Judaism itself held no doctrine of "original sin."
- (3) Third, children are innocent until they become cognizant of "good and evil."
- (a) Jesus Himself said: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).
 - (b) Through inspiration, Paul wrote that none who are unclean can enter into the kingdom of heaven (Ephesians 5:5). To this, we could add what Jesus said, "... unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).
 - (c) Therefore, if children are born into the world with a "fallen human nature and tainted by original sin" (to use the words of the Catholic Catechism), why would men have to become as little children, who are also "contaminated" with sin? The Bible is clear: sin is not inherited. No baby has ever been born bearing the guilt of Adam's sin. No one bears the responsibility for Adam's sin but Adam himself. (This section adapted and copied from www.apologeticspress.org)
- (4) Fourth, context provides clarification. The focus of Psalm 51 is on David's personal sin, not the concept of original sin. These are the words of a man in dark despair. He is saying, to paraphrase, "I have never been any good, even from the time I was born." Does he mean this literally? No, he does not! This is a good demonstration of *poetic expression* and overstating the case for emphasis. It is hyperbole. The language David uses in this psalm emphasizes his own wrongdoing:
- (a) "Blot out my transgression" (v. 1), "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (v. 2), "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (v. 3), "Against You, You only, have I sinned" (v. 4), and so on. There is no reference to original sin in his plea. Instead, the psalmist seeks deliverance from his own sins and transgressions.
 - (b) Why does David mention being formed in his mother's womb? It's possible he was simply using hyperbole for emphasis. He is not speaking literally about his conception or birth but about his present

state of distress. He expresses how it feels to have his world unravel due to sin. He feels overwhelmed, as though disobedience has consumed him, and it seems as if his entire life has been marked by rebellion.

(c) For example, contrast this verse with Psalm 22:9-10. That Psalm and this one are in direct contrast to one another. We need to understand that both Psalms reflect different moods David was in. In Psalm 22, David felt good and confident in his relationship with God. In Psalm 51, David is feeling depressed and not as confident in his relationship with God.

(5) As mentioned in the introduction and Interpretation Guideline, it is imperative for the Bible student to understand the type of literature being read. Wisdom Literature should be understood as poetic literature in contrast to doctrinal treatises like Romans or Hebrews, for example. It contains hyperbole, figurative language, and poetic expression.

[D1'] 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

a) Returning to David's plea for mercy,

(1) He wants the spirit, attitude, and disposition within man to be converted. The innermost being of the individual is where the truth should dwell. One gets the sense that David has not had the proper view of God's wisdom. Once God's children go to His word to receive God's viewpoint, then one can take the prescribed steps (given by God) towards being cleansed. But not before!

(2) In the New Testament, one must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38) to be cleansed of one's sins (Acts 22:16). Then, as a Christian, one must repent and pray when one commits sin (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-9).

[C1'] 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

a) David did not consider it possible to cleanse himself. He knew only Yahweh could do that.

(1) David was asking God to cleanse him spiritually and morally. The thought was connected with the atoning sacrifice of a substitute. He is referencing what the Levitical priests did with hyssop - a brush used to sprinkle the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:22) and to sprinkle the priests with purifying water (Numbers 19:18). David is pleading with the Lord to act as his priest, using hyssop to declare him cleansed from all sin.

[B1'] Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice.

- a) Again, David wants to know that his wrong doing has been taken away. Sin is what separates one from God (Isaiah 59:2); the source of real joy. If one is sincerely concerned about being righteous, then sin makes the heart sad.

[A1'] 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

- a) "Hide Your face"

(1) David realizes God's omniscience enables Him to see all that he has done. Yet he also knows God is willing to forgive his sins. This would be how God would blot out David's sins.

(2) Notice how the spiritual individual does not try to hide or minimize one's own sinfulness. Since God is all-knowing, it is foolish for us not to openly confess our sins to God.

- b) This verse identifies a key parallelism in the poetic structure of this psalm. When God blots out David's iniquities, He hides His face from those iniquities. Therefore, to hide His face is the same as Him blotting out iniquity. To do so means that God has extended mercy to David. This is the emphasis of the first chiasmus and why the words "blotted out" are repeated between verses 1 and 9. The central focus of this section was mercy only comes from God, Who is a just Judge.

[A2] 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

- a) This line starts a separate but related thought. It is a second chiasmus construct to emphasize what needs to happen within the heart of one who has been forgiven.

(1) David views himself to be so wicked that he needs to be created anew. He does not want God to rebuild the heart he already has but to give him a brand new one that would be clean, not defiled like the heart he has now. He wants to be strong. He does not want to vacillate back and forth between righteousness and unrighteousness.

(2) Indeed, every child of God should have the resolve to be faithful to God day after day (cf. Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9).

[B2] 51:11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

- a) David appeals to God to have a relationship of worship. In order to be in the presence of the Almighty, he would need God's forgiveness. David's reference to the Holy Spirit is equal here to the presence of God (and is not a reference to his being an inspired writer).

[C2] 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

- a) David lists here the two keys to avoiding sin:
- (1) Recognize the joy of God's salvation. God's children appreciate the significance of being saved. They do not want to jeopardize that salvation in any way. Are we willing to forfeit our eternal home in heaven for this sin?
 - (2) Have a willing spirit. Those who successfully resist temptation are those who have a determination and commitment. They have a willingness to serve God and His will, instead of Satan and his will.

[X2] 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

- a) Verse 13 is the focal point of the second chiasmus in the overall poetic framework of this psalm. David is grateful to know God, His ways, and forgiveness, so much so, he will tell others about Him! David now knows how great his sin was; therefore, he also knows how great God's forgiveness is (cf. Luke 7:47; 22:32).
- b) This is the attitude that anyone who has been saved should have! The most evangelistic people are those who have personally tasted God's forgiveness.

[C2'] 51:14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

- a) David cannot speak to others (v13) until his personal problem with sin is resolved. Once he is delivered, he will have no restraint in proclaiming God's goodness.
- b) How can God open his lips? By forgiving his sins.

[B2'] 51:16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

- a) There was no sacrifice for sins such as adultery and murder. In fact, the Law of Moses demanded the offenders be put to death (Leviticus 20:10; Numbers 35). David needed to repent and beg for God's forgiveness. It is the hypocrite

who goes through the motions of sacrifice without genuine repentance whom God despises (cf. Micah 6:6-8).

[A2'] 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise. 18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

- a) God wants a broken spirit and contrite heart from His creation, mankind. There is no arrogance, no self-justification, no ignoring the sin. David is throwing himself upon God's mercy.
- b) "Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem."
 - (1) While thinking about praising God, David is reminded of the present inadequacy of the place of worship. David would like to build a suitable place to praise God. However, that task was given to Solomon (1 Kings 8:19).
- c) "Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar."
 - (1) David was not ignorant of the requirements of the law of sacrifice in verse 16. He fully intends to implement all that God has asked of him. Yet the spiritual man knows that going through the motions without the proper attitude of heart is worthless. But when one has the proper attitude and does what God has asked (the particulars) then God accepts one's worship.

The following is an example of a sermon outline based on this great Psalm. It demonstrates how one does not have to be defeated by the presence of sin in his life. He simply needs to deal with the sin in a positive way like David demonstrates in this Psalm.

A. FAILURE IS NOT FATAL!

- a) STAGE ONE: THE FAILURE - Be willing to admit that we failed.
- b) STAGE TWO: THE FIXING - Pray to God to remake us and restore us. Man cannot fix his own problem. David tried to fix his own problem. We have to go to God and let Him fix the problem.
- c) STAGE THREE: THE FUTURE - Gratefully serve God in response to His forgiving nature.

PSALM 67

You Shall Judge the People Righteously

This Psalm is an excellent example of how spiritual people find reasons to offer thanks to God. It portrays a heartfelt desire to see God's way and His salvation spread throughout the earth. Though often overlooked, this psalm is a simple, beautiful prayer of joyful praise and thanksgiving that is still relevant today.

Penman: Anonymous
Classification / Genre: Praise / Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:

Psalm 67 has been called "Israel's Missionary Psalm." Psalms 67 through 69 emphasize what God will do through the Messiah. The wish is expressed that all nations would know the God of Israel. (James Smith, p. 320) The setting for this Psalm seems to have come just after another successful harvest (v. 6). But the Psalm does not limit itself to that theme. As in all thanksgiving Psalms, God's people find abundant reasons to thank Him. It requires a certain mind set to always be thankful, yet spiritual people develop it well, continually seeing things on a daily basis for which they give God thanks.

The poetic structure of Psalm 67 is centered around God's righteous judgment.

The first parallel lines (the A pair) are easily identifiable through word repetition, "God will bless us" (vss. 1 and 7). As the earth increases in the knowledge of God's way and salvation, the fruitfulness of the earth shall increase (B pair - vss. 2 and 6). Fruitfulness yields rejoicing and thankfulness; thus, the people praise God (C pair - vss. 3 and 5). Why do the nations sing and are glad? Because God will judge the people righteously and govern the nations of the earth (central axis). A simple analysis - A: Blessing. B: Proclamation. C: Praise. X: Judgement.

Chiasmus of Psalm 67:

[A] 1 God be merciful to us and bless us, cause His face to shine upon us;

[B] 2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

[C] 3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

[X] 4 "Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth. Selah"

[C'] 5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

[B'] 6 Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.

[A'] 7 God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 67

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] 67:1 To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, Seal

a) Based on the promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), these people see the fulfillment of that promise with God's blessings. The words of this verse are like the priestly benediction of Numbers 6:24-26. God's shining face is an expression illustrating God's satisfaction with His people (cf. Psalm 44:3; 89:15).

[B] 67:2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.

a) Spiritual people respond to God's blessings by thinking about how they can, in turn, be a blessing for God. This verse wishes that all the nations learn about the way (works) of God and His salvation.

[C] 67:3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

a) This verse is repeated again in verse 5. Its call to praise is a bold desire that all the peoples of the earth arise to offer appropriate worship to Jehovah. By adding the word "all" in the second line, it amplifies the magnitude of this call, reminding us of Philippians 2:11, where all the creation will offer praise to Jesus.

[X] 67:4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth. Selah

- a) Two emotions should come forth from the nations: (a) gladness, and (b) joyous singing. The reasons for these? Because God will judge the peoples with righteousness (fairness) and will guide them.

[C'] 67:5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

- a) Repeat of verse 3 in order to emphasize the importance of the nations praising God. Verse 4, however, has provided further rationale for this praise and thanksgiving.

[B'] 67:6a Then the earth shall yield her increase;

- a) What proof does the spiritual people offer as to why the world should praise Jehovah? The produce of the earth. Whereas the pagan gods are powerless to control anything, let alone the crops, the only true God can easily call the earth to yield its produce. The spiritual Israelites did not view God as theirs alone. He is truly the God of all the earth and He blesses all the earth.
- b) There is an interesting connection to the Hebrew language here. The Hebrew word TORAH (H8451), which means "instruction, or knowledge of God's way," comes from the Hebrew root word YARAH (H3384), which is an agricultural term meaning "to throw, pour, or cast forth." By implication, the knowledge of God's way and His salvation is closely connected to the blessing of the earth's increase.

[A'] 67:6b God, our own God, shall bless us. 7 God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

- a) The spiritual person does not confuse the source of blessings. They know they come from God (not from their own might, chance, or luck). They also acknowledge that the blessings of God should evoke a natural response (perhaps in view of the tremendous power that had to be demonstrated by the giving of those blessings). That response is fear. Everyone everywhere should fear God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

PSALM 69

Save Me, O God!

This Psalm is perhaps the most sorrowful prayer in the entire book. The psalmist is grieving and pours out his heart to God, openly admitting his mistakes and shortcomings but fully recognizing God's sovereignty. He is pleading for the Lord's help. In the epistle of James, he wrote, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). This psalm is an excellent example of the soul that has faith in that promise and power of prayer, as the psalmist proclaims, "The Lord hears those in need!"

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Psalm of Lament / Imprecatory / Messianic
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: John 2:17, 15:25; Romans 11:9-10; 15:3; Acts 1:20

Psalm 69 is one of the most quoted psalms in the New Testament. The inspired writers applied this psalm to their teaching on six different occasions, and Jesus also quoted a line from it. While not all of this psalm is prophetic, the citations emphasize the Messianic-related promises contained within this individual, Psalm of Lament. It is a prophetic picture of the sufferings of Christ. "The reproach and persecution [David] endured for God's sake under the old covenant, in some measure, foreshadowed the life of the perfect Servant of God, Jesus Christ" (Eddie Cloer, Truth for Today Commentary, Psalms 51-89. P. 315). We also find imprecatory elements within the composition as the psalmist desires that God "pour out His indignation upon them." Not only does he want to be rescued from the despair and suffering brought about by his enemies, but he wants righteous justice to be served.

The poetic structure of Psalm 69 can be outlined in a few different ways depending on how the reader identifies its framework. James Smith arranges the psalm as: "(1) The Messiah's Prayer for Deliverance, vss. 1-21; (2) His Prophecy regarding His Enemies, vss. 22-28; and (3) His Profession of Thanksgiving, vss. 29-36." (Smith, The Wisdom Literature and Psalms. P. 323). Hebrew parallelism can also be identified throughout the psalm with word repetition, synonymous thought, and contrasts. Below is a suggested chiasmus outline.

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary of Psalm 69:

[A] 1-2 Save me, O God!

[B] 3 I am weary with my crying

[C] 4 They are mighty who would destroy me

[D] 5-6 You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You.

[E] 7-12 For Your sake I have borne reproach, shame has covered my face.

[F] 13 Hear me in the truth of Your salvation

[X] 14-15 Deliver me out of mire, let me not sink

[F'] 16-18 Hear me speedily, Draw near to my soul, and redeem it

[E'] 19-21 You know my reproach, shame, and my dishonor

[D'] 22-28 Add iniquity to their iniquity, let them not come into Your righteousness.

[C'] 29-32 Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.

[B'] 33 For the LORD hears the poor, And does not despise His prisoners.

[A'] 34-35 For God will save Zion

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 69
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

[A] 69:1 To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Psalm of David. Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. **2** I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

a) Set to "The Lilies." A Psalm of David

(1) The "Lillies" is the literal interpretation of the Hebrew word, *SHUSHAN*, *SHOSHANNAH* (H7799).

(2) The ASV, KJV, and NASB, read, "To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim." It may be a reference to the composition's general beauty or to a specific tune known at the time. Or, it may also be instruction for a particular six-stringed instrument known as the Shoshannim.

b) David clearly admits that he is in serious trouble. Yet his response to the problem is noteworthy. He turns to God to save him. We know that God loves His children, so why allow suffering? Consider what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:6-7.

c) David is attempting to express his troubles in terms that might possibly persuade God of the seriousness of his situation. Upon reading the last line, one might question whether David sought alternatives before seeking help from God.

[B] 69:3 I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

a) Sometimes, God might test the limits of our endurance - but never beyond what we are able to bear. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it," (1 Cor 10:13).

[C] 69:4 Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.

a) David again notes that the opposition to him is unfounded (cf. 35:19). And not only that, but the opposition is numerous, even more than the hairs on his head. David used this same expression in Psalm 40:12 to compare his sins. We can surmise that, apparently, David was not a bald man!

b) The psalmist also notes the power of his opposition. Indeed, they must be powerful if they are capable of inflicting such damage to a king like David. Yet the situation has grown so bad David is paying the price for what he did not do (or not steal).

c) Jesus cited this line from the psalm in John 15:25, "But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated me without cause.'" He used it to comfort and encourage His disciples the night He was to be betrayed.

[D] 69:5 O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You. 6 Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.

- a) Whenever David was in trouble, he invariably thought of his sinfulness. Perhaps he was afraid that God was punishing him for his transgressions. It could also be that David does not try to hide from, justify, or excuse his sins. Here, he freely and openly admits that he has sinned. He is willing to face God's judgment, but he will not yield for a moment to the judgments of the enemies.
- b) Note the parallelism between folly and wrongs. There is no attempt to minimize his sins. He fully recognizes that they were stupid, foolish acts. We can certainly learn from his example. In fact, David is quite concerned about his influence. When he sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet reminded him of his bad example (2 Samuel 12:14). While concerned about his own plight, David was even more concerned how his suffering might discourage the faithful or even bring suffering upon them.

[E] 69:7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Shame has covered my face. 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; 9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. 10 When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. 11 I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. 12 Those who sit in the gate speak against me, And I am the song of the drunkards.

- a) Dishonor (cf. 38:11) has covered the face of David. He feels that he does not look like a beloved child of God. Yet David knew that there was a special honor for the one who suffers solely because of one's faith (cf. Matthew 5:10-11).
- b) What price does David pay for his faithfulness? He notes being estranged from his family, in addition to the dishonor mentioned in verse 7. This leaves him virtually without any support group. Most anyone can relate to how our suffering would certainly be compounded if our own family abandoned us.
- c) "Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up"
 - (1) While this verse was popular among the New Testament writers, it is essential to first consider it in the context of David's life. David had a consuming concern for God's house (which could refer to God's family, but more likely refers to the temple which was yet to be built). He is suffering because people hate God - that is why the reproaches of others have been directed at him. Since people cannot directly get to God, they

find a perverted comfort in making His followers suffer. However, there is value in God's eyes when His people suffer for His name (cf. Acts 5:41).

(2) As mentioned, this verse is cited in the New Testament. John uses the first half to refer to Jesus' zeal for the temple (John 2:17), and Paul uses the second half to refer to Christ's selfless love and commitment to God's will (Romans 15:3).

d) "When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting"

(1) David tried some drastic measures to secure God's favor, such as weeping and fasting. Yet, nothing David tries restores him to God or draws compassion from men. He is truly frustrated by his inability to find help and support.

(2) From the top tiers of society (those who sit in the gate) to the bottom ranks (the drunkards), everyone makes fun of David. The elite of the society as well as the dregs of society.

[F] 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.

a) David has not limited his prayers to God just when it suited him. He is a praying man. Yet he now hopes that his request comes at an acceptable time, meaning that it will please God to answer him now. A good lesson is found here. We must pray to God when He will hear us - not at a time when we have continually rebelled or on judgment day (cf. Psalm 32:6).

b) David asks God to answer him, a request which he will repeat two more times (vss. 16 and 17).

[X] 69:14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, And out of the deep waters. 15 Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

a) Some commentators make verses 13-18 the central axis of the chiasmus. In our estimation, verses 14 and 15 contain the obvious emphasis of the composition. On either side, David is asking God to hear him (verses 13 and 16-17). What does he want God to hear? His plea for rescue: "Deliver me ... let me be delivered! Don't let me sink." This would be the desired result of his prayer: in the midst of his enemies, in the time of his despair, before he succumbs, he is rescued!

b) David repeats the metaphors he mentioned earlier—the mire and the deep waters (cf. vss. 1-2). He again attempts to alert God to the serious trouble he

is in. He is fearful that this might be his demise, thus, he does not want it to end with the enemies thinking they had won.

[F'] 69:16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. 17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble; Hear me speedily. 18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; Deliver me because of my enemies.

- a) David does not consider himself worthy of God's care or attention. His appeal is entirely based on God's character. As God's faithful servant, he needs his master to notice his plight and come to rescue him, and come quickly!
- b) The word "redeem" is an important word in the Hebrew Old Testament - *GA'AL (H1350)*. It has to do with one's next of kin who comes to defend his troubled relative (cf. in death - Num 35:19; in buying land, or liberty - Leviticus 25:25,48f; Ruth 3:1ff). Perhaps David recalls that God has redeemed him in the past (cf. 2 Samuel 4:9). Now, he needs God to do it again.

[E'] 69: 19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries are all before You. 20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. 21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

- a) Although he has attempted to alert God to his plight in earlier verses, David here attests that God knows his reproach, shame, and dishonor.
 - (1) God clearly sees all David's adversaries. So, will He please now deal with them? David truly feels alone, and his troubles have apparently affected him physically. His broken heart indicates that he is very discouraged. While David looked for some love and compassion, he found only those who wanted to contribute to his grief.
 - (2) Here is what is known as a Messianic "type" in the person of David. What David experienced symbolically, Jesus experienced literally - which is called the "anti-type" (cf. Matthew 27:34,48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30).

[D'] 69:22 Let their table become a snare before them, And their well-being a trap. 23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; And make their loins shake continually. 24 Pour out Your indignation upon them, And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. 25 Let their dwelling place be desolate; Let no one live in their tents. 26 For they persecute the ones You have struck, and talk of the grief of those You have wounded. 27 Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. 28

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

- a) In view of verses 1-21, David now begins his imprecation - a curse called upon one's enemies. His enemies are comfortable now, but David wishes God would attack them in their prosperity.
- (1) He wishes God would make them old before their time. When he wishes for God to pour out His indignation, he asks for the maximum amount to be dispensed to the enemies. He does not want God to hold anything back. David is familiar with the Scriptures and knows how God feels about sinners, so why not punish them now?
 - (2) He continues the imprecation, asking that they would have no children, no possessions, no army - nothing. Why does David desire their downfall? They have tried to take the place of God. In addition, they are happy when people suffer. The way they have treated David adds one more sin to their already full accounts.
 - (3) David does not express a hope of repentance in the heart of the wicked. He is convinced that they are beyond help. Therefore, he wishes for the punishment that God Himself has already declared - removal from the book of life (Exodus 32:33; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 20:15). David knows that God has a record of all the righteous. He also knows the wicked have lost their names being recorded in that precious book.
- b) This passage is quoted in Acts 1:20 and applied to Judas.

[C'] 69:29 But I am poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bull, which has horns and hooves. 32 The humble shall see this and be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.

- a) This verse serves as a link between the imprecation in the last section to that of praise in this one. David is the one being afflicted, instead of the unrighteous. But he still is strong in faith that God's salvation will come and rescue him, setting him in a secure spot (on high).
- b) If David is restored, what will he do? Worship God! What do the wicked do in their prosperity? They continue to worship self. God is always more pleased with those who offer true, heartfelt worship, in contrast to those who simply go through the motions (cf. Mt 15:8-9).
- c) Discouragement has destroyed many people's zeal, but it is up to us to press on and not become discouraged (1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9).

[B'] 69:33 For the LORD hears the poor, and does not despise His prisoners.

- a) Some Bible versions render this line as, “the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.” (ESV)
- b) Here, David provides a good reason for why we should not become discouraged. It is because God knows what we are going through and He hears our cries. He will not abandon His children!

[A'] 69:34 Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. 35 For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it. 36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it.

- a) David concludes this poetic composition with a word of praise and hope for better days to come. If the creation praises God - then should not man join also? The reason for the praise is recognition of God's blessings.
 - (1) Some see in the reference to Judah an obvious proof that this Psalm is post-exilic - occurring after Israel returns from captivity in Babylon. However, it is not completely unreasonable that David would wish for the building up of the cities surrounding his kingdom in Zion. Note also how this verse moves from the personal concerns of David to those of a national level.
- b) Indeed, blessings will be given to all the faithful and their children. Notice that the blessings belong only to those who:
 - (1) Serve God and
 - (2) Love His name.
- c) It is fitting to note that David, even in the midst of one of his most desperate prayers, was able to close with a word of praise!
- d) There are several applications that Christians can draw from Psalm 69:
 - (1) David's personal experience provides comfort to the modern reader, knowing that we are not alone in our grief and that God hears us. When you feel overwhelmed by trouble - when you feel like the floods are closing over your head - cry out to God. He hears. He will rescue.
 - (2) Our experience of suffering for Christ is the same as what David experienced. “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.” (James 5:13)
- e) The sufferings of Christ as our Messiah are prophetically portrayed in this psalm many years before He came to earth. Luke records that Jesus stated,

“But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”
(Luke 17:25) Yet He still “humbled Himself and became obedient to the point
of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

PSALM 73

I Have Put My Trust in the Lord God

This Psalm starkly reminds us that strong faith requires complete trust in God. Despite all the injustices, struggles, and disappointments the world brings to our lives, our walk with God is absolutely worth the effort. It may seem that the wicked have it all, but in reality, they do not. They really have nothing, and what they do have won't last. The only one who truly holds all and provides for His own is God. Put your trust in Him!

Penman: Asaph
Classification / Genre: Lament and Didactic
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:

Psalm 73 is titled “A Psalm of Asaph.” Asaph, the son of Berechiah, is listed among three of David's chief musicians “to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy” (1 Chronicles 15:16-19). Twelve Psalms are ascribed to him (Psalms 50,73-83). The attribution in the title may indicate Asaph wrote the psalm, or it could be the style in which it was written. Asaph was a noted musician and poet. He is called a “seer” in (2 Chron. 29:30), and he was also named the “chief minister” to go before the ark of the covenant (1 Chron. 16:4-5).

Psalm 73 is the first psalm of Book Three (73-89). James Smith states that “this is sometimes called the ‘Leviticus’ book because of its emphasis on the sanctuary and holiness.” He goes on to explain that Psalm 73 “has been dubbed the theological center of the Psalter.” (p. 331-332)

Psalm 73 is an Individual Lament and Didactic Wisdom Psalm. The psalmist asks the age-old question, “Why do the wicked prosper and the godly suffer?” It is a question to which almost any faithful child of God can relate. Throughout the Bible, many of God’s faithful servants can be seen struggling with the same inquiry. Here, the psalmist presents his case, and then he reasons through the dilemma, recognizing that all along, faith in God is the answer. Perhaps this psalm is best understood by considering the dominant pronouns the psalmist uses throughout the composition. In the first section (vss. 1-12), he repeatedly uses the words “they, them, and their” to indicate his frustration with the circumstances of the wicked. In verses 13-17, he transitions to his own concerns and actions and uses “I” the most often. Then, the dominant pronoun “you” becomes most prominent in the latter part of the psalm (vss. 18-28). These transitions of where one places one's focus are a beautiful image of how one develops faith: “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Suggested Chiasmus for Psalm 73:

[A] 1-3 Truly God is good ... But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled ... When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

[B] 4-12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.

[C] 13-14 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain

[D] 15-16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me

[X] 17 **Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.**

[D'] 18-20 You cast them down to destruction. ... You shall despise their image.

[C'] 21-22 I was so foolish and ignorant.

[B'] 23-26 There is none upon earth that I desire besides You. ... God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

[A'] 27-28 Those who are far from You shall perish ... I have put my trust in the Lord GOD.

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 73
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

[A] 73:1 **A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**

a) Asaph begins by expressing his belief that God is good to Israel, especially to those who are pure in heart. Yet when one considers the entire Psalm, it

seems even Asaph had doubts about the truthfulness of this statement. Those who are pure in heart are totally committed to God, and that commitment is more than external allegiance. The psalm begins and ends with Asaph declaring that his heart belongs to God (cf. Matt 5:8).

- (1) This phrase will take on greater importance as one considers the argument of the whole Psalm. Asaph will demonstrate the relative unimportance of external circumstances. The real key is one's attitude toward external events. The reality is that this world is not our home, and our faith in God is what is most important (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)
- (2) At first reading, this verse might seem out of place in the Psalm, but we shall see how it actually serves as the key to understanding its main point.

b) "My feet had almost stumbled."

- (1) Asaph admits his view of external circumstances almost caused him to lose his faith. It is important for the child of God to see things from God's perspective and not man's perspective. Failure to do so could cause one to have a tainted view of life.
- (2) He also admits he was envious of what the arrogant had, wishing that he had it. He would observe their prosperity and desire to be equally prosperous. Certainly, Asaph is characteristic of all of us. It is easy to see what others have and wish we had the same.
- (3) The apostle Paul offers a stern caution to one who desires wealth (1 Timothy 6:9-10), as did Jesus (Mark 10:23).

[B] 73:4 For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them. 11 And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.

- a) The righteous always seem to have problem after problem. The wicked, however, seem to have the good life with few difficulties (cf. Job 21:9).
 - (1) A necklace is worn to be seen by others. Therefore, the wicked are not ashamed to wear their pride as a necklace over their garments of violence. All can see these items and yet God does not strike them down for such arrogance.

b) "Their eyes bulge with abundance"

- (1) In ancient times, most people survived by strenuous labor, which kept their bodies slim and healthy. Being fat meant one was generally considered to have an easy, prosperous life. Asaph would have been comforted somewhat if they had at least suffered a painful death, but he has not witnessed such suffering.
- (2) The wicked have not only wealth, but they have an overabundance, demonstrated by their being obese. Asaph also notes that the imaginations of their wicked heart run riot - that is, doing whatever they want. It is true that when people have the ability, availability and money to do evil they will often do it. For example, when prostitutes are available more men will commit fornication. When abortion is legalized more women will abort children. The child of God, on the other hand, is warned to flee (cf. 1 Tim 6:11).
- (3) When people are surrounded with wealth and power they are not afraid to say things that are improper to say. This is a demonstration of their arrogance noted earlier (cf. Jude 16).
- (4) Also, when one begins to say things that are out of place they become bolder with each statement, eventually challenging the very authority of God Himself. God will allow such blasphemy to continue for a time but He will eventually close every evil mouth (Mt 15:11).
- (5) It is interesting to note that in ancient times, as well as modern, believers seem to think that good health and prosperity are guaranteed promises of God. Such was not the case with Lazarus (cf. Luke 16) and many others who would have to face poverty in their lives (Rom 8:35). It is crucial for spiritual people today to realize their physical circumstances have no bearing on God's love for them!

c) "Therefore, his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them."

- (1) The meaning of this verse is unclear. The problem lies in the interpretation of the pronoun his. There are basically two possibilities:
 - (a) It refers to the sons of fatness who return to their place of arrogance and pride, or
 - (b) It refers to the sons of God, who return to the place of evil because God has done nothing to correct them.
- (2) "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

(a) This is an illustration of their lack of respect for God (cf. v. 9). The idea seems to be that if God is so intelligent, why does He not do something? Apparently, God does not even know what is happening on the earth (perhaps this implies that they do not even believe in God's existence).

d) As Asaph concludes his discussion concerning the wicked he notes they are always doing well. Thus, the point is clear - why doesn't God do something? If He would strike them down in their wickedness it would bring a quick and satisfying end to the problem as far as Asaph is concerned.

[C] 73:13 Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.

a) In view of the abundant life the wicked enjoy, Asaph concludes that his righteous life was in vain. It is not unusual for God's children to ask, "What is in it for me?" Peter and the disciples did this, and Jesus did not chastise them for it (cf. Matt 19:27; Mark 10:30). Yet God's word encourages us by letting us know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58).

(1) Asaph seems to note that God has not been ignoring him but instead chastening him. So, his sacrificial life for God has not reaped blessings but has, instead, made his life miserable.

b) At this point, we see a radical change in Asaph's thinking. It seems to suddenly dawn on him that God knows all that he has said and has a plan to address it in His own way.

[D] 73:15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. 16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me—

a) Asaph knows there are many people who are faithfully living according to God's Word. Undoubtedly, they do not deserve to so quickly dismiss their faithfulness.

b) Asaph admits that he does not have all the answers to this dilemma. He would, though, like to understand why things are this way.

[X] 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.

a) Here, we have the central thought or emphasis of the psalm (the Axis). Asaph reveals to us what spiritual people do when they do not have the answers to life's troubling questions: They go to God (cf. James 1:5). It was only when Asaph went to God that he perceived their end. This was the key because

God has addressed, in His Word, what would eventually happen to the wicked.

- b) As Asaph turned his eyes upward and looked to God, he took his focus off the world and himself. As he focused on God, his thinking changed, and his perspective shifted to the spiritual and eternal. It was then that he realized true reality - he understood their end.

[D'] 73:18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

- a) The wicked's security and prosperity are merely delusions and temporary. When God acts, their fall will be quick and decisive (and thorough!).
- b) Asaph notes their destruction takes place in a moment and their punishment will be filled with unthinkable suffering (1 Cor 15:50-51; Matt 24:48- 51).
- c) God's anger toward the wicked has been asleep, but the time will come when He will awaken and when He does, He will despise the wicked. Those whom the Lord despised will be sent from His presence (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10) with the Lord saying, ". . . depart, for I never knew you" (Matt 7:23).

[C'] 73:21 Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind. 22 I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.

- a) It seems the more Asaph thought about the "good life" of the wicked the angrier it made him. It was upsetting that God would allow such people to prosper! But then, he shows his spiritual concern here. He openly admits his thinking was based on ignorance, and he was not using the cognitive abilities God has blessed man with, as opposed to the animals.
- b) God truly expects His people to think things through and consider them from His perspective. Through Isaiah, He stated, "Come now, and let us reason together" (1:18). Paul also emphasizes that a faithful Christian's mind must be active and engaged in service to God (Romans 12:1-2).

[B'] 73:23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. 24 You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. 26 My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

- a) To Asaph's credit, he did not allow his pride or his anger with God to completely blind him. He stayed with God and allowed God to guide him through this problem. Like Job, Asaph realizes that all he really wants (or

needs) is God. If the wicked have all that material wealth, so be it. Asaph would rather have God. Asaph is even willing to accept physical failure (as well as financial failure - v. 25). Others may have superior health and be wicked, yet Asaph would be willing to face extreme sickness and still have God.

- b) Can we today say we desire nothing but a covenant relationship with God? With the right perspective, we can see that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” (2 Cor 4:17). Indeed, the faithful child of God wants nothing more than to be guided by His counsel instead of man’s counsel (cf. Psalm 1:1, 119:105).

[A'] 73:27 For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. 28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.

- a) Asaph has truly grasped the whole picture! The wicked will perish. Their prosperity and health is only a temporary state. Indeed, all who have opposed God shall be destroyed.
- b) Reflecting on the words of this psalm, what is the best thing you can say about yourself? Would it be, as with Asaph, “I am close to God”? Asaph has made his relationship with God his refuge. Not money or fame. In addition, he wants to tell of God’s mighty deeds. The works of God are too important to keep silent about. God’s people of every age have taken seriously the task of telling others about God.

PSALM 100

Know that the LORD, He is God

How often do we praise God simply because He is good? How often do we express our gratitude to Him for Who He is? This psalm captures the heart of such admiration for our Creator.

Penman: Anonymous
Classification / Genre: Praise / Thanksgiving
Poetic Device / Structure: Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:

Psalm 100 is part of Book Four (90-106). The penmen for most of this collection are anonymous, with only Moses ascribed to Psalm 90, and David to Psalm 101. The principal focus of this book is Yahweh, as each psalm mentions His great name. The central theme is “Come! Let us worship the Lord! Call upon His name!” The book is often compared with the Book of Numbers, bringing to mind Israel’s wilderness wandering.

Psalm 100 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving, and it is the only psalm to bear this phrase in its title. It was selected for this course because it has a simple, but still relevant message that is indicative of Book Four. It invites the whole world to “Come! Sing! And worship the Lord!” The text is filled with a joyful confidence expressed by the inhabitants of the earth as they consider the glory of the Creator when His creation knows Him and submits to His reign.

The poetic structure of Psalm 100 is easy to identify. The parallel A sections (verses 1 and 5) start and end with corresponding, jubilant acknowledgments of Yahweh to all people of all times. The second pairing, the B pairs (vss. 2a and 4b), are calls to action for Who He is - “serve,” “be thankful,” and “bless His name!” The C sections (vss. 2b and 4a) are calls to worship - “Come before His presence,” and Enter His gates with thanksgiving and praise.” The central axis of the composition (verse 3), reveals the reason for praising Him, “Yahweh is God, our Creator! And we are His creation.”

Simple Chiasmus of Psalm 100:

[A] 1 Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

[B] 2a Serve the LORD with gladness;

[C] 2b Come before His presence with singing!

[X] 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

[C'] 4a Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise!

[B'] 4b Be thankful to Him and bless His name.

[A'] 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

*Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 100
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)*

[A] 100:1 Make a joyful shout to the LORD all you lands!

(1) "Make a joyful shout to the Lord."

- (a) Is there anything more worthy of praise than Almighty Yahweh? Indeed, there is not! The psalmist immediately encourages the reader to acknowledge Him and shout out. With the implication found in verse 4 of "entering His gates... and courts," one might imagine the privilege a subject is given to enter the chambers of a powerful, victorious, and benevolent king. Would the subject enter with an apathetic or disagreeable attitude, or by joyfully shouting?
- (b) All nations and all people, despite one's background, ethnicity, or any classification, are called to come before the Almighty King, Yahweh, and worship Him! This brings to mind the events detailed in Revelation 15:5, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."
- (c) The KJV and ESV render this verse as "Make a joyful *noise* to the Lord." The Hebrew word *RUA* (*H7321*) "occurs thirty-three times in the Old Testament and was utilized fundamentally to convey the

action of shouting or the making of a loud noise. ... Many times the shout was a cry of joy, often in response to the Lord's creating or delivering activity on behalf of His people." (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

[B] 100:2a Serve the LORD with gladness;

- (1) The word "serve" in Hebrew is *ABAD* (*H5647*). It is "a verb meaning to work, to serve. This labor may be focused on things, other people, or God." In the context of laboring for the Lord, "the word does not have connotations of toilsome labor but instead of a joyful experience of liberation." (Complete Word Study Dictionary)
- (2) This is a scene of jubilant veneration rendered toward the throne of the preeminent king. Participating in the actions of exalting the Lord is not only required, but is an indication of what lies within the heart of the worshiper. Is it a spirit of joy and thankfulness? The psalmist is instructing us that it should be!
- (3) Charles Spurgeon (a denominational preacher in the 1800's) stated, "As for the true believer in Jesus, he serves his God because he loves to serve him; he assembles with the great congregation because it is his delight to worship the Most High." (Spurgeon)

[C] 100:2b Come before His presence with singing.

- (1) Worship involves being in the presence of God. Revelation chapters 4-5 are a verbal painting of what worship looks like in the celestial realm. Those rendering their adoration to God are seen surrounding His throne and focusing on Him. He is the central object of everyone's praise. The entire scene is poetic imagery of being in his presence.
- (2) When we gather with the congregation to worship, we should keep this imagery in mind. We are not the audience, God is. We are not there to be entertained, we are there to unite together "with one mind and one mouth [to] glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6). All acts of worship are to be utilized to render adoration toward our God. Singing is the prescribed method we find here and throughout the New Testament. What better way to unite together in praise than "continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).
- (3) Psalms 92, 95, 96, 98, 101, 104, and 105 also express the thought of "Sing praises to the Lord!" Each psalm gives more reasons for why He is worthy of our praise and song.

- (a) In Psalm 92, we should sing to Him because He is “The Most High” (*ELYON - H5945*) meaning “Supreme.”
- (b) In Psalm 95, the call to worship Yahweh is because He is “the rock of our salvation,” “the great God, And the great King above all gods,” and “our Maker.”
- (c) Psalm 96 states, “He is to be feared above all gods.” Psalm 98 proclaims, “For He has done marvelous things!” In Psalm 101, David says He will “sing of His mercy and justice.” The psalmist of Psalm 104 declares, “I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.” Psalm 105 adds “His wondrous works!”

[X] 100:3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

(1) “Know that the LORD, He is God”

- (a) This verse is perhaps best translated as, “Acknowledge (realize, or understand) that Yahweh is God!” The psalmist goes on to say that worshipers should recognize that God is our Creator and we belong to Him.
- (b) David uses two Hebrew terms for the name of God - Yahweh and Elohim.
 - i) The word “LORD” (usually written in capital letters) is *YHWH (H3068)*, which is the name of God, Yahweh. (See notes in Psalm 8:1)
 - ii) The word “God” is *ELOHIM (H430)*, which commonly designates the one true God (Genesis 1:1) and is often paired with God's unique name Yahweh.

(2) “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

- (a) The psalmist also uses two descriptions of God - one of Creator and the other of Shepherd.
 - i) “He made us” is clear indication that the One Whom is to be praised deserves our respect and admonition because He is our Creator (cf. Genesis 2:4-25). We would not exist if it were not for His love, mercy, and grace.
 - ii) “Sheep belonging to his flock” is a reference to the nature of God, our Shepherd. This is a term used frequently throughout

the Scriptures to describe the care, provision, and protection that God provides to His creation. Jesus stated something similar this verse in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."

(b) A further implication we can draw from God as our Creator, is that He created our voices - the voices we are to use in our praise to Him.

[C'] 100:4a Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise.

- (1) Here, the psalmist confirms the imagery of the call to worship of verse 1 with approaching the throne room and into the presence of the Sovereign King. It is a scene of public worship, of a great gathering of thankful, loyal servants assembling in one place to praise their Supreme Ruler.
- (2) In the New Testament, we learn that not only are the gates and courts open to all (Hebrews 4:16), but even the way to the Holy of Holies has been thrown open (Hebrews 10:19).
- (3) This line of the psalm might be recognizable because of a popular devotional song: "I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart; I will enter His courts with praise. I will say this is the day that the Lord has made. I will rejoice for He has made me glad."

[B'] 100:4b Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

- (1) Here is the core reason for such praise and adoration, "be thankful!" Considering Who God is (1 John 4:16), what He has done for us (John 3:16), and what He offers us (1 John 5:11), we should shout and sing praises because we are thankful.
- (2) "Bless His Name" means to revere, exalt His name. There is no greater name than Yahweh that might pass across our lips.

[A] 100:5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

- (1) This is the supplemental parallel to verse 1. "Make a joyful shout to the LORD!" Why? Because of His truth and mercy. When Jesus came to earth and dwelt among us, he was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

PSALM 109

Help Me, O Lord my God!

This Psalm is a personal prayer for help in a time of difficulty. It is the plea of one who feels betrayed, oppressed, and persecuted. The psalmist calls upon God to render judgment on his wicked enemies who have relentlessly attacked him with their lies and hateful accusations. It is an angry psalm, one of frustration being poured out before the Lord, but correctly put in His hands.

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Imprecatory
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: John 15:25; Acts 1:20

Psalm 109 is the strongest of the Imprecatory Psalms. This Psalm, much like Psalm 69, is about David clearly and openly wishing for the punishment of the unrighteous. He leaves nothing here to the imagination. As we read the psalm, we must remember that the Old Testament did not allow taking personal vengeance on one's enemies (Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 32:35; Proverbs 25:21-22; cf. Romans 12:19-21). David also understood the forgiving nature of God - but only to the penitent. He sees no effort by these wicked people to repent. Their lives have taken a clear and consistent turn to evil. Thus, he calls upon God to punish them.

Poetic Structure of Psalm 109. The general structure of the psalm is arranged as: [A] 1 Praise; [B] 4-5 Hostility of the enemy; [C] 6-20 Vengeance of the Lord; [D] 21-25 Frailty of the faithful; [E] 26-29 Enemy vanquished; and [F] 30-31 Praise. The psalm also has identifiable parallelisms that present contrasts between the faithful and the wicked. The central axis is composed of many lines (vss 8-19) that consist of the several imprecatory punishments (spoken curses) the psalmist directs toward his enemy.

[A] 1 Do not be silent, O God of my praise. (109:1)

[B] 2-5 They repay me evil for good, hatred for my love. My enemies say of me (109:5)

[C] 6-7 Find a lying witness, an accuser to stand by his right hand (109:6)

[X] 8-19 **May his posterity be destroyed, his name cease in the next generation.**

[C'] 20-21 May the LORD bring all this upon my accusers, upon those who speak evil against me.

[B'] 22-29 Though they curse, may you bless; shame my foes, that your servant may rejoice.

[A'] 30-31 I will give fervent thanks to the LORD; before all I will praise my God.
(109:30)

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 109
(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] 109:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. Do not keep silent, O God of my praise!

- a) David is in trouble once again and cries out to God for help. The general sense of the psalm is encapsulated in verse 26 with the words, "Help me!" This phrase is one David frequently used in his poetic compositions (cf. Psalms 22:19, 38:22, 40:13, 59:4, 70:1, 119:86,175).
- b) "Do not keep silent" is a request David frequently makes to God (Psalms 28:1, 30:12, 39:12). The mouths of his enemies are not silent (v2). They speak lies and accusations. Thus, he desires God to speak, for what He says is true and just.

[B] 109:2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful Have opened against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause. 4 In return for my love they are my accusers, But I give myself to prayer. 5 Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, And hatred for my love.

- a) In David's complaint to God, he gives details of what the wicked have done
 - (1) Spoken against him (v. 2),
 - (2) Lied (v. 2),
 - (3) Hated (v. 3a),
 - (4) Fought against him unjustly (v. 3b) and

- (5) Repaid evil for good (v. 4-5).
- b) On the basis of those sins, David now wishes for God to act in punishment and judgment.
- c) The actions of David's enemies here are a symbolic picture of what Judas became to Jesus. This section is credited to the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:16, "this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus."
- d) Verses 1-5 have a similar tone as Jeremiah 18:19-23. In that passage, the prophet pleads with God in an almost identical fashion, using many of the same phrases as here. Perhaps the prophet Jeremiah recalled this psalm as he faced persecution from enemies of God.

[C] 109:6 Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. 7 When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin.

- a) David does not take justice into his own hands. He understands that vengeance belongs to the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 13:4; Hebrews 10:20). Therefore, he implores God to:
- (1) Set wicked rulers and judges over his enemies (v. 6a),
 - (2) Let false accusers stand before them (v. 6b),
 - (3) Let them be found guilty (v. 7a),
 - (4) Let their prayers be found sinful (v. 7b; cf. Psa 50:16; Prov 28:9),

[X] 109:8 Let his days be few, and let another take his office. 9 Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow. 10 Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg; Let them seek their bread also from their desolate places. 11 Let the creditor seize all that he has, and let strangers plunder his labor. 12 Let there be none to extend mercy to him, nor let there be any to favor his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15 Let them be continually before the LORD, That He may cut off the memory of them from the earth; 16 Because he did not remember to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17 As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; As he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18 As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, So, let it enter his body

like water, And like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, and for a belt with which he girds himself continually.

a) The central axis of this psalm consists of several lines that detail David's imprecation. It outlines what David wishes to happen to the man's children and wife. Such imprecation is difficult to understand in light of Jesus' commands in Matthew 5:44. Yet, we still must understand that God's judgment does occasionally include one's family (cf. Judges 9:57) and the Old Testament does mention how the father's sins can adversely affect the other members of his family (Exodus 20:5; 1 Samuel 2:31ff; Luke 19:41ff). With this understanding, we read how David wishes that his enemies would have:

- (1) A short life (v. 8a),
- (2) A supplanter (v. 8b).
- (3) An orphaned family and widowed wife (v. 9),
- (4) Children forced to beg (v. 10),
- (5) Loss of all possessions (v. 11),
- (6) No friends or defenders (v. 12),
- (7) Suffer the disgrace of no posterity (v. 13),
- (8) No blessing of forgiveness (v. 14) and
- (9) Not overlooked by the angry God (v. 15).

b) "Let another take his office"

- (1) This verse is cited in Acts 1:20, when Peter stood up among the disciples and proclaimed that another disciple should take the place of Judas, who had betrayed Jesus.
- (2) Through the Holy Spirit, Peter applied the parallel of this psalm to Jesus. When David was betrayed, he desired that the betrayer would be desolate and that another would take the betrayer's office. Thus, the Son of David, Jesus (whom David often prefigured), would desire the same outcome. Guided by the principle of the quoted Scripture, they sought to replace Judas because they believed it was what Jesus would have wanted (cf. Luke 24:45).

[C'] 109:20 Let this be the LORD's reward to my accusers, and to those who speak evil against my person. 21 But You, O GOD the Lord, deal with me for Your name's sake; because Your mercy is good, deliver me.

- a) David draws a stark contrast between himself and his enemies: they will be punished, he will be rescued. They receive a verdict, he receives mercy.

[B'] 109:22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23 I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like a locust. 24 My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness. 25 I also have become a reproach to them; When they look at me, they shake their heads. 26 Help me, O LORD my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy, 27 That they may know that this is Your hand— That You, LORD, have done it! 28 Let them curse, but You bless; When they arise, let them be ashamed, but let Your servant rejoice. 29 Let my accusers be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.

- a) "Help me, O LORD my God!"

(1) This line summarizes the entire psalm. In David's time of need, he turns to God. While the nature of his imprecation may be difficult for us to accept, God will punish those who do evil. It is not wrong to ask God to do what He has promised. He is a just and loving God, and His children may rightfully expect Him to be their righteous and just Judge. The main point is that David placed his troubles in God's hands. He leans on God's strength and trusts Him to help him. That is the main lesson we can draw from this psalm. When God's faithful encounter problems, take it to Him first, and allow Him to remedy the trouble.

- b) These verses also mark a major change in direction. David now enters into a prayer for deliverance. He gives God reasons he needs help:

(1) He is too weak to help himself (vss. 22-24) and

(2) God does not want His child to endure public disgrace (v. 25).

[A'] 109:30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; Yes, I will praise Him among the multitude. 31 For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn him.

- a) These verses end the psalm with a promise to give thanks to God for being one who comes to the aid of His children. The psalm begins with praise and ends with praise. It is a reminder that no matter what the circumstances might be, God is always worthy to be praised.

PSALM 110

Sit at My Right Hand

There is tremendous significance to the title “A Psalm of David” for Psalm 110. It is in this designation that we can see the surpassing greatness of this Psalm. It has been noted that this is a Messianic, or “enthronement Psalm.” Yet, it is not the enthronement of David that is being discussed. David is noting the enthronement of the one true king, one who is far greater than himself.

Penman: David

Classification / Genre: Messianic

Poetic Device / Structure: Alternate Pattern

Bible Citation / Reference: Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:34-37; Hebrews 5:6

Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. Some theologians have noted as many as 27 direct citations or indirect allusions from this psalm in the New Testament. Indeed, Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies (cf. Zechariah 6:12-13). This psalm is used by New Testament writers to emphasize the fulfillment of several prophecies. The true significance of the psalm is found in the role of the Lord being a priest-king. Jesus affirmed that this Psalm was written by David (Mark 12:36f) as did Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33-35). Both emphasized that David had in view the coming Messiah, but that his view of that Messiah contradicted the common viewpoints of the Jewish people.

Psalm 110 has an Alternate Pattern poetic structure. It is a simple pattern of ABA'B'. The pattern is noted in the “A” pairings: The Lord is Ruler over all and He is Priest over all. The “B” pairings provide poetic details to the two descriptions of this Priest-King.

[A] 1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

[B] 3 Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

[A'] 4 The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

[B'] 5 The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with

dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore, He shall lift up the head.

[A] 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." 2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

- a) Immediately, we notice that David has three individuals in mind here:
 - (1) The Lord (Yahweh),
 - (2) David's Lord - the Messiah ("My Lord") and
 - (3) David himself.
- b) It is important to note that King David - whom his subjects call "Lord" - has a king who is Lord over him. The King of Israel, David, kneels to the Almighty King. This was an important truth that Jesus challenged the Jews to figure out (Matthew 22:41-46). The Lord's disciples continued to explain this principle in their own ministry (Hebrews 5:6ff).
- c) After the first line, we hear what God had to say to David's Lord. "Sit at my right hand" clearly and vividly illustrates the power and authority given to the Son (cf. Matthew 28:18). This power will be more fully explained throughout the Psalm and will then be given an even greater explanation in the New Testament. The following points are identified in the Psalm and explained in the New Testament:
 - (1) He is greater than David (Acts 2:34) and greater than the angels (Hebrews 1:13),
 - (2) God exalted Him, although man rejected him (Acts 5:30ff),
 - (3) Jesus reigns as Savior and Intercessor (Acts 5:31; Romans 8:34),
 - (4) Jesus completed His task and was therefore able to sit at God's right hand (Hebrews 10:11f) and
 - (5) He will reign until all is surrendered to Him (Hebrews 10:13; 1 Corinthians 15:25f).
- d) Verse 2 demonstrates the unity displayed by God and His installed king. God intends that the rule of the king be strong. There is no weakness in the monarchy of Christ and He is not fearful of taking his stand in the middle of His enemies.

[B] 110:3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

- a) The king's army is a volunteer army, one in which subjects willingly dedicate themselves to the will of their king (cf. Rom 12:1-2; Phil 2:17). This commitment is pleasing and refreshing to the King.
- b) It is admitted that there are a variety of translations (and subsequent meanings) of this verse, but the above seems to fit well with the text and context.

[A'] 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

- a) This verse now includes the second of the direct oracles from the mouth of God. There is nothing more significant (or powerful) than a word from God Himself especially when that word is coupled with an oath (cf. Hebrews 6:17f; 7:20ff). This oath is so sure because God will not change His mind.
- b) The unchangeable oath is that God's king will also be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek, whose name means "king of righteousness," is discussed in a number of Biblical texts (cf. Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 5:5-10; 6:19-7:28). The text in Genesis notes two important features of Melchizedek that will be fully realized in Christ:
 - (1) He was a "priest of God Most High," and
 - (2) He was the "king of Salem" (thought to be Jerusalem, but the key is found in the word "salem" which means "peace" - cf. Hebrews 7:2).
- c) Thus, the significance is found in the fact that Jesus, like Melchizedek, united two very important offices: priest and king. Those who claim that Jesus has not yet assumed His position as king (or who recently assumed it) completely miss the significance of this doctrine. Jesus did not occupy the office of priest for several centuries before he assumed the office of king. The point is, that like Melchizedek did, Jesus is currently occupying both at the same time.
- d) The book of Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is now (and has been since His ascension) serving as our High Priest. Equally, as He claimed "all authority" (Matthew 28:18), He has been serving as our king over His kingdom the church (Matthew 16:16-18; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:5ff). The importance of this verse is seen in its frequent usage by the Hebrew writer.

[B'] 110:5 The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with

dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore, He shall lift up the head.

- a) Just being announced as a priest-king does not mean there will be no conflict. Indeed, the enemies of righteousness will rise up to oppose the Lord's appointee. Yet that opposition will be futile, because He has the Lord at His right hand, a common reference to power as well as protection (cf. 16:8; 109:31).
- b) Beginning with the second line of verse five we note six actions of the successful priest-king. Each action is seen in the phrase "He will..."
 - (1) "He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath." This indicates that He will meet powerful kings in battle but will utterly destroy them (shatter). He meets these kings in battle because He is filled with wrath, no doubt because they have pursued a course of wickedness.
 - (2) "He will judge among the nations." Jesus is one who, as king, will judge the wicked (cf. John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
 - (3) "He will fill them with corpses." The nations will have ample evidence of the king's superiority over them. Their land will be filled with the slain of those who foolishly chose to oppose God's king.
 - (4) "He will shatter the chief men." Even the most powerful, the chief men, will pose no serious threat to His kingdom. He again will easily defeat them.
 - (5) This last verse indicates the two benefits derived from a successful military campaign (actions 5 and 6):
 - (a) "He will drink from the brook." He will be able to refresh himself, drinking the cool water from the brook.
 - (b) "He will lift up His head." Because God has given Him victory He will be able to enter the city with confidence and boldness, with head lifted high, since He is the victorious king.
- c) The thought here harmonizes beautifully with the theme of Revelation where there will be victory for those who follow the Lamb of God. And, as Paul noted, we "overwhelmingly conquer" with Christ (Romans 8:31-39).
- d) What lessons can be learned from this great Psalm? Certainly that we would be wise to follow God's priest-king. We are either with Him as He secures victory or we are counted among His enemies whom He will shatter. The choice is ours.
- e) Psalm 110 also provided the foundation of three crucial teachings the apostles taught concerning Christ:

- (1) His exaltation,
- (2) His ascension and
- (3) His royal priesthood.

PSALM 118

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

This Psalm emphasizes how great our God truly is! The composition highlights His glorious attributes of sovereignty and righteousness, inviting the reader to trust in Him. It further acknowledges God's goodness expressing it with gratitude, joy, admiration, and praise.

Penman: Unknown
Classification / Genre: Messianic and Praise
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: Matthew 21:9,42; Mark 11:9, 12:10; Luke 19:38, 20:17;
Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7; Hebrews 13:6

Psalm 118 is quoted by Jesus to identify Himself as the Messiah. It is one of the most quoted psalms by the New Testament writers, making it quite obviously a Messianic psalm. While no author is attributed to the psalm, many believe it was penned by King David, acknowledging God for a great victory. Other theologians speculate the psalm may have been written during the time of Nehemiah to celebrate the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Nehemiah 12:27ff). Still others attribute the psalm to the the founding of the second temple (Ezra 3:10-11). In any case, it is clearly also a Psalm of Praise and Thanksgiving.

The famous Reformation leader, Martin Luther, stated "This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore, I call it my own. ..."

Psalm 118 is the last hymn of the "Hallel Psalms." The Hebrew word *HALAL* (*H1984*) means "to praise, commend, or celebrate." This term was used as the Jewish liturgical designation for Psalms 113–118, indicating that they were read in the synagogues on festive occasions. Sometimes, this section is called the "Egyptian Hallel." One commentary writes that the psalms were "recited at the three great feasts, at the Feast of the Dedication and at the new moons, and not on New Year's Day and the day of Atonement, because a cheerful song of praise does not harmonize with the mournful solemnity of these days." (Keil and Delitzsch, "Psalms," pg. 202)

This Psalm of Praise and Thanksgiving fully indicates the excitement a worshiper has as he approaches Jerusalem. The pronoun "I," found in a number of verses (5-14,19,21,28), seems to come from an individual of importance (perhaps King David?) who has enjoyed a great deliverance. It praises Yahweh for the victory! Yet the Psalm also has a community ring to it, perhaps demonstrating how it was incorporated into a Psalm of thanksgiving for all the people.

Poetic structure of Psalm 118. James Smith describes the psalm as a poem with five movements. “After an introductory call to praise (vss. 1-4), the poem describes deliverance from (1) distress (vss. 5-9); (2) danger (vss. 10-16); (3) death (vss. 17-21); and (4) disgrace (vss. 22-26).” (Smith, pg. 408) Another commentary proposes the psalm has two parts: (1) worshippers praising God on their way to the temple (vss. 1-18); and (2) worshippers praising God at the temple (vss. 19-29). (Cloer, Eddie. *Truth For Today Commentary*, pg. 648)

The Hebrew parallelism style of poetry forms a simple pivot chiasmus of three pairing, pointing to an axis. The central emphasis is seen in verses 14-16. Yahweh is the “strength, song, and salvation” of the psalmist. Since Jesus applied the psalm to Himself, one might read the poem from His viewpoint. The Messiah is triumphant because the mighty arm of Yahweh is powerful! His victory is celebrated by [A and A’] “Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good!” The Messiah celebrates because [B] the He trusts in Yahweh (vss. 5-9) and [B’] has been acknowledged by the people (vss. 22-27). The reasons He is thankful is because [C] the He was surrounded by enemies (vss. 10-13) but [C’] Yahweh promised to resurrect Him (vss. 17-21)!

Simple Pivot Chiasmus Summary of Psalm 118:

[A] 1-4 *PRAISES TO YAHWEH* “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

[B] 5-9 *THE MESSIAH TRUSTS IN YAHWEH* “It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.”

[C] 10-13 *THE MESSIAH SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES* “All nations surrounded me, But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.”

[X] 14-16 *THE MESSIAH’S VICTORY* “The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. ... The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”

[C’] 17-21 *THE MESSIAH’S PROMISED RESURRECTION* “I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the LORD.”

[B’] 22-27 *THE MESSIAH ACKNOWLEDGED* “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.”

[A'] 28-29 *PRAISES TO YAHWEH* "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

Graphic: Chiastic Structure and Parallelisms of Psalm 118

(For a better understanding of the poetic structure of the Psalms, it is highly recommended to read the Background and Interpretation Guidelines sections of this course before proceeding with the exposition of the text, if you haven't done so already.)

[A] **118:1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 2 Let Israel now say, "His mercy endures forever." 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, "His mercy endures forever." 4 Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy endures forever."**

- a) Offering thanks to God finds a simple reason in being offered: He is good. This is general enough so that each worshiper can identify with God's goodness. Yet all can equally raise their voices to recognize those good blessings. Thus, this call to worship demonstrates the excitement also seen in Jeremiah 33:11.
- b) A second reason offered for the thanksgiving is God's lovingkindness (mercy). This is one of the keywords in the Psalms, occurring 93 times (*CHESED* - *H2617*). It refers to God's character - specifically His love for Israel based on His covenant.
- c) "Let Israel ... Let the house of Aaron ... Let those who fear the LORD now say"
 - (1) A threefold division of the people are all called to come to give thanks.
 - (2) "All Israel" implies anyone who belongs to the nation. "House of Aaron" indicates those of the Levitical priesthood. "Those who fear God" might be a designation for Gentile converts, (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:41-43); the truly devout of Israel, (cf. Psalms 111:10; 112:1); or a general term for priest and people alike.

[B] **118:5 I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore, I shall see my desire on those who hate me. 8 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man. 9 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.**

- a) "I called on the LORD"

- (1) The psalmist transitions to a single voice and now presents personal reasons for praising God. He specifically recounts how God delivered him from a seemingly impossible situation. What especially impresses the psalmist is that when he was in distress (cf. Psalm 116:3) he cried to God and found help. Thus, he praises God for His timely deliverance. When he notes that God set him in a large place he may be saying God saved him from death (since Sheol was considered a confining place). It is possible he is merely saying that God saved him from a difficult situation.
 - (2) When God is on one's side there is no reason to fear (cf. 1 John 4:18). Here, the psalmist relies on his faith and trust in God to bring him the victory (1 John 5:4). With this bold trust in God the psalmist recognizes that man cannot truly harm him (cf. Mt 10:28; cf. Psalm 56:4,11).
 - (3) Out of all those whom the psalmist considers his supporters, the Lord is clearly among them. For this he is thankful. This enables him to have confidence when he is before (looks on) his enemies.
 - (4) The writer of Hebrews quotes verse 6 to emphasize Christian confidence (Hebrews 13:6).
- b) "It is better to trust in the LORD"
- (1) Through the avenue of repetition, the psalmist shows how it is better (a superior choice) to trust in God even though he may have some seemingly impressive alternatives. The two verses are exactly the same except for the words man and princes.
 - (2) These verses provide a valuable lesson for us today. We often look to so many different things to deliver us (our own ability, wealth, friends, family, etc.). None of these can be completely trustworthy. Only God is worthy of one's complete trust and confidence.

[C] 118:10 All nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 11 They surrounded me, Yes, they surrounded me; But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12 They surrounded me like bees; They were quenched like a fire of thorns; For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13 You pushed me violently, that I might fall, But the LORD helped me.

- a) If the speaker is a king one can understand the distress he feels. If he represents the nation it is clear there is a major crisis confronting the people of God. It seems possible this Psalm is reflecting upon a time when the nation of Israel was threatened by one or more of its many enemies.
- b) It is clear that the psalmist feels confident with the Lord on his side. He can be surrounded (cf. vss. 10,11,12) yet the Lord will provide deliverance.

c) "They surrounded me"

(1) The repetition of the word "surround" emphasizes that the psalmist is not facing an imaginary foe. The opposition is real, but so is the deliverance from the Lord. The Lord's deliverance is decisive, for the foe is cut off (second of three times this phrase is used) indicating their surrounding of God's people failed.

(2) The swarming of bees illustrates the closeness and intensity of the enemy's attack. When a thorn bush catches fire it burns quickly and is soon extinguished. This theme also finds support in the New Testament where the power of evil will be intense but short lived (cf. Revelation 20:9-10).

d) "You pushed me violently"

(1) Now the enemy is addressed directly where the psalmist notes that he attempted to make him fall but the Lord, who was stronger, helped him.

(2) Notice how the Lord does not keep his children from trouble. They do face difficult times. But, these difficult times develop important qualities in God's people (James 1:2-3).

[X] 118: 14 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

a) This verse quotes exactly the words of the victory song sung by the Israelites after their delivery from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 15:2). And that ancient delivery serves as an example of present and future redemptive acts of God.

b) Now other voices join theirs to that of the king in thanking God for the victory. These verses reflect the excitement and joy a community would have upon the return of their victorious army. It is clear why the Lord gave them victory - they were righteous. This is equally true for the ultimate victory (2 Pet 3:13). The reference to God's right hand (three times) is a typical phrase referring to power and strength (cf. 110:1,5).

c) The power of God, having been personally witnessed by the people, is worthy of praise!

[C'] 118: 17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death. 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD, through which the

righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, and have become my salvation.

- a) When trouble comes one often wonders if this day might be his last. The psalmist considered the present distress to be life threatening and even thought he might die. Yet, he did not die, convincing him it was in God's plan that he remained alive to tell others of what God had done for him.
- b) The psalmist is not blind to how God worked in his life. He knows he has been disciplined and intends to allow that discipline to produce God's desired result. In the same way God disciplines His children today (Heb 12:11).
- c) "Open to me the gates of righteousness"
 - (1) The gatekeeper is encouraged to open the gates for the victorious king and nation. The gates are gates of righteousness allowing only those who are faithful to God to enter. Once entered, the victors intend to offer thanks to the Lord.
 - (2) This seems to be the gatekeeper's response, and he acknowledges that only the righteous will enter.
- d) Again, we see why this is called a thanksgiving Psalm. The worshiper offers thanks to God for His answering him (accomplished in the salvation God provided).

[B'] 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. 23 This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. 27 God is the LORD, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

- a) This verse may give us a hint of the problem the king faced. Perhaps the builders, the men of power and authority in Israel, had been the king's enemies. This would make the king the stone which they rejected but, through God's vindication, proved to be the chief stone. Another theory is that the nations (cf. v. 10) are the builders, but they did not consider Israel an important nation in their building process. This would prove to be a fatal mistake since Israel was God's chosen. The cornerstone could either be the main stone in the foundation or the key stone in the arch which held the entire arch together.
- a) "The stone which the builders rejected"

- (1) It is known to every student of the New Testament that this verse was an extremely popular verse with New Testament writers. Why? Because the stone foreshadowed Christ in two important respects:
- (a) He was rejected by many as insignificant (cf. Mark 12:10-11; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7), and
 - (b) He was the cornerstone which held God's entire plan of salvation together (Ephesians 2:20-22; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11; Col 1:15-20).
- (2) God's marvelous doing was to vindicate the king (or nation) despite the enemies. Ultimately, in its New Testament application of Christ, God's marvelous act was to raise Christ from the dead (Acts 4:10-11).
- b) "This is the day the LORD has made"
- (1) The day referred to here seems to be the festive day of celebration for the victory secured in the past. This beautiful verse can ring true for any and every day. God's people should continually be thankful for every gift, including the gift of each new day.
- c) "Save now, I pray, O LORD"
- (1) In praise to God the people also offer a plea to God for salvation. The word *HOSANNA* (G5614) that was shouted during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; and John 12:13 is of Hebrew origin (*YASHA* - H3467) and (*NA* - H4994). It literally means, "Oh save!" It is an exclamation of adoration, which is translated here as "save now" or "do save."
- (2) The people at Jesus' triumphal entry also used this verse to complete their words of praise by saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The verse in its Old Testament context seems to be the blessing the priest is pronouncing upon the people as they enter the temple to worship. Certainly, all who come to God's presence with the distinction of being His people are truly blessed.
- d) As the words of thanksgiving continue to flow, the worshipers now express their gratitude to God for giving them light, probably meaning here deliverance (cf. Psalm 43:3; Esther 8:16). Also, the worshipers encourage the sacrificial animal to be offered, indicating that this was probably one of the three major Jewish feast (festival) days (Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles). It is interesting how this section, with its quotations in the New Testament, fittingly echo the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

[A'] 118:28 You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. 29 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

- a) With synonymous parallelism the worshiper announces why he is here to worship God - He is my God!
- b) This seems to be the response by the congregation, repeating the refrain of verse 1. There is nothing inappropriate about repetition if the congregation can say these things sincerely - truly from the heart. Jesus encourages us to do things with our hearts (cf. Mt 15:8-9).

PSALM 119

Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet

This Psalm emphasizes a love for the word, commandments, and promises of God. It serves as a guide for living a good life. The psalmist encourages the reader to take pleasure in the Yahweh's law and to follow His ways, as this is the key to happiness and blessedness. It underscores the significance of having a humble heart and a teachable spirit.

Penman: Unknown
Classification / Genre: Didactic
Poetic Device / Structure: Acrostic
Bible Citation / Reference:

The penman of Psalm 119 is unknown. Most theologians believe that it was written by David. However, there is substantial evidence that it could have been written by Ezra, Daniel, or Jeremiah. The psalmist appears to have suffered scheming and derision directed at him. He was a victim of persecution. Indeed, each of the proposed authors suffered such difficulties in their lives, yet they maintained their trust in God and His Word. In any case, whoever wrote the 119th Psalm clearly loved the Word of God and praised Him for it! The themes of persecution and affliction throughout the psalm are not incidental. They carry significant weight throughout the composition, shaping its narrative. They add to the character and fortitude of the psalmist, which provides a good example of hope and assurance to the reader. One Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, stated that Psalm 119 will either "warm" a man's love toward God or it will "shame him."

Psalm 119 beautifully expresses that the Word of God is all-sufficient. The entire psalm is about God's Holy Word (the Scriptures, or Bible). It is the grand Psalm extolling the magnificence of the word. Every verse, with the exception of not more than one or two, has something to say about the Word of God - its precepts and ordinances, or its testimonies and promises. Perhaps the Apostle Paul had Psalm 119 in mind when he penned, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of Psalm 119 is its prolific use of synonyms to describe the Word of God. There are eight or nine different terms used throughout the psalm to describe the His Word, which each signifying much the same thing, yet with subtle differences. They are the words:

1. **COMMANDMENTS** (*MISVOTH* - H4687) Appears 22 times. It is defined as, "a command, whether human or divine." It emphasizes the direct authority of what is said. God has the right to give orders.

2. JUDGMENTS (*MISPAT/MISPATIM - H4941*) Found 23 times in the text. It is sometimes rendered as “ordinances” or “rules.” It is a word meaning “a verdict pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree, divine law.” It describes a legal decision given by God to be followed by the people.
3. LAW (*TORAH - H8451*) Occurs 25 times, meaning “any set of regulations.” It is “to teach” or “direct,” and coming from God, it means “inspired revelation.” It is used in the Old Testament to describe the entire Pentateuch or just one law.
4. PRECEPTS (*PIQQUDIM - H6490*) Seen 21 times, and means “properly appointed,” or “mandated.” It expresses the idea that God is paying attention to how He wants things ordered.
5. STATUTES (*CHAQAQ/HUQQIM - H2710*) Found 21 times, and sometimes translated as “decree,” or “ordinances.” It means “an enactment,” or “something prescribed.” It is referencing the binding force and permanence of Scripture.
6. TESTIMONIES (*EDAH/EDOTH/EDUT - H5713*) It is used 23 times and means “testimony, precept, warning sign.” In the Old Testament it is connected to legal language dealing with a witness bearing testimony. Here, the psalmist incorporates it to refer to the direct and bold high standards set by God.
7. WAYS (*DEREK - H1870*) It appears 13 times and *means* “a path, journey, or way.” Figuratively, it implies “a course of life or mode of action.” Thus, walking in God’s ways is living according to His Word.
8. WORD (*DABAR - H1697*) Occurs 24 times, meaning “speech, saying, utterance, or spoken thing.” It is sometimes translated as “Ways” and is a general word embracing all of God’s truths, stated or promised.
9. WORD (*EMRAH/IMRA - H565*) Found 19 times. It is similar to *DABAR*, but slightly different. It means, “commandment, speech, word.” It has been translated as “Promise” in some Bible versions. It refers to God’s directives that, if followed, have the hope of future blessings. It is used in parallel with teaching, covenant, commandment, and voice.

(References: Brown-Drivers-Briggs; Complete Word Study Dictionary; Strong’s Concordance)

Psalm 119 teaches the “Benefits of God’s Word.” The composition progresses in such a way that it enables the reader to clearly see how the psalmist personally benefitted from studying God’s Word. All of his points still hold true today for the child of God who, likewise, stands to benefit considerably from studying the Bible. The entire psalm elaborates upon a summary statement found in verse 9, “How can one cleanse his/her way? By taking heed according to Your word.” Here is what the Word of God can guide us in:

1. Keeping one's way pure (9, 101).
2. Keeping one from sin (11, 101).

3. Encouragement (14, 16, 25, 28, 35, 70, 77, 92-93,149).
4. Producing reverence (38).
5. Giving hope (43, 49-50, 74, 81, 114, 147).
6. Promoting gratitude (62).
7. Giving wisdom (98, 100, 104).
8. Giving direction (24, 105, 130, 155).
9. Giving life (25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 159).

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm of the book. Some have called it “the Mount Everest of the Psalms.” It the same size as the entire book of James, Philippians or Ruth. With its 176 lines divided into 22 stanzas, consisting of 8 lines each, it more than doubles the length of the longest psalm in the entire Psalter (the second longest is Psalm 78 with 72 lines). Its lengthiness is partly due to its composition style - a perfect (or regular) Hebrew Acrostic. An *acrostic* is a poetic composition in which the first letter of a word in a line spells out the alphabet or forms a word. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza in Psalm 119 is identified by the name of a Hebrew letter. For example, the first eight verses begin with the letter “A,” which is “Aleph” in Hebrew. The second stanza begins with the letter “B,” which is “Beth.” This pattern continues throughout the remaining lines. Because of its poetic structure, the Masoretic scribes called this psalm “The Great Alphabet.”

There are a number of acrostic psalms in the Book of Psalms (Psalms 29; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; and 145), but none are exactly like this one. The details included in the stanzas are extremely helpful in explaining the different meanings of the words used to describe God’s word. (See “Interpretation Guidelines” for more information.)

The poetic structure of the psalm 119 has been extensively analyzed. While Psalm 119 is clearly an acrostic, some Bible scholars and theologians have identified various mathematical patterns within the psalm as well. There is no doctrinal benefit from these findings, being predominantly speculative, but they are interesting to note nonetheless. We have shared the information here, simply as a point of interest. One theologian* noted a peculiar arrangement, stating that “the 22 alphabetic units (or cantos) ... are outlined in a ‘nested’ menorah pattern: a menorah within a menorah within a menorah, as follows: Verses 1-8, 9-16, 17-24 {25-32, 33-40, 41-48 [49-56, 57-64, 65-72 (73-80, 81-88, 89-96, 97-104) 105-112, 113-120, 121-128] 129-136, 137-144, 145-152} 153-160, 161-168, 169-176.”

The Bible professor* proposed the 176 Masoretic verses divide into seven “Caticums” (collections of cantos):

Canticum I	vs. 1-24	3 cantos, 24 verses
Canticum II	vs. 25-48	3 cantos, 24 verses
Canticum III	vs. 49-72	3 cantos, 24 verses

Canticum IV	vs. 73-104	4 cantos, 32 verses
Canticum V	vs. 105-128	3 cantos, 24 verses
Canticum VI	vs.129-152	3 cantos, 24 verses
Canticum VII	vs.153-176	3 cantos, 24 verses

*(Source: Casper Labuschagne, <https://www.labuschagne.nl/ps119.pdf>; Christensen <www.bibal.net>)

Psalm 119 is a single, unified composition, but each of the 22 subsections also contains its own specific message. The stanzas do not form a singular chain, all linked together (even though the entire psalm is about the word of God). They are more like a string of pearls, where each has equal but independent value. This is emphasized in verse 160: “The sum of your word is truth ...” Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet also has certain meanings, numerical values, and spiritual implications that the Jews ascribed to them. It is uncertain exactly how the psalmist intended to apply those meanings to each section, but any Jewish reader in ancient times would have associated significance with them.

Due to the extensive length of Psalm 119, we will not present every verse, but instead a concise, proposed summary of the subsections is included below instead of analyzing the psalm verse by verse. (Directly quoted or adapted from James Smith, pp. 410-418)

The entire psalm is about the power of God’s word. With each letter, we have ascribed an attribute of that power

Verses 119:1-8

1. ALEF: The power of the word for blessing. “Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes!” (V5) The psalmist acknowledges the blessing of being obedient to God’s divine law. It is the source of mankind’s happiness and what truly “establishes” one.

As you read each stanza, note all of the synonyms and how often the psalmist repeats them.

Verses 119:9-16

2. BET: The power of the word for cleansing. “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.” (V11) Absorbing and heeding the commandments of God can keep one pure.

Verses 119:17-24

3. GIMEL: The power of the word for knowledge. “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.” (V18) The psalmist’s prayer is for

insight that can only happen if one's eyes are opened by God. His word provides such guidance - the remedy for spiritual blindness.

Verses 119:25-32

4. DALET: The power of the word for reviving. "Revive me according to Your word." (25) One may be overwhelmed with worldly problems, but the Scriptures can revitalize the heart, soul, and spirit. It provides strength to endure hardships, but only if one clings to His word.

Verses 119:33-40

5. HE: The power of the word for understanding. "Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart." (V34) The Hebrew letter "He" is most often prefixed to verbs to create a causative form. Thus, in the Hebrew language, the psalmist is expressing his desires such as, "Cause me to learn," "Cause me to understand," "Cause me to walk," and so on.

Verses 119:41-48

6. WAW/VAV: The power of the word for testimony. "I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed" (V46) Blessings of salvation and shameless delight in the Word of God.

Verses 119:49-56

7. ZAYIN: The power of the word for comfort. "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me" (V50) Thinking back on what God has done, and that His word is permanent, comfort is found in the fact that He is consistently present.

Verses 119:57-64

8. CHET (HETH): The power of the word for satisfaction. "The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words." (V57) These are the words of one who is content. Perhaps the Apostle Paul reflected on these words when he wrote, "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." (Philippians 4:11)

Verses 119:65-72

9. TET: The power of the word for good. "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments." (V66) Instead of trusting in his own heart, the psalmist understood and prays for the need to live in good judgment and awareness.

Verses 119:73-80

10. YOD: The power of the word for acquittal. "May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, So, that I will not be ashamed." (V80) Peace, comfort, fellowship, and edification are enjoyed, which stem from God's Word, while living in a prideful, perverse world.

Verses 119:81-88

11. KAF: The power of the word under testing. "They almost destroyed me on earth, but as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts." (V87) Satan is constantly trying to pull people away from God. This is a prayer for strength to never forsake God or His Word.

Verses 119:89-96

12. LAMED: The stability of the word. "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." (89) One of the most beautiful characteristics of the Scriptures is that it never changes. The words God has spoken are forever settled, despite man's attempts to alter them in various ways.

Verses 119:97-104

13. MEM: The power of the word to enlighten. "I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts." (V100) No education on earth surpasses the knowledge one gains from the Scriptures. It can make one wise, as the preacher stated in Proverbs 2:6, "For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

Verses 119:105-112

14. NUN: The power of the word for guidance. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (V105) The Scriptures can make one's path visible. It is possible to walk in darkness, but it is difficult. The light of the Word removes that difficulty.

Verses 119:113-120

15. SAMECH: The power of the word for holiness. "Depart from me, evildoers, that I may observe the commandments of my God." (V115) Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" Here, the psalmist desires to separate himself from his enemies and follow only God's ways. To be holy, as God has commanded us to be (1 Peter 1:16), requires us to be separate from worldly ways and fully dedicated to His commands.

Verses 119:121-128

16. AYIN: The power of the word in prayer. "Therefore, I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way." (V128) Jesus taught,

in the “Model Prayer” to pray for protection from temptation and evil (Matthew 6:13). The way one protects themselves is by knowing God’s Word, which enlightens and protects one from false teachings.

Verses 119:129-136

17. PE: The power of the word unto wisdom. “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore, my soul observes them.” (V129) The Hebrew word translated as “wonderful” means “a wonder, a miracle, a marvel.” It is a word used to represent something unusual or extraordinary. Indeed, God’s word is inerrant, which is a clear sign of its supernatural origin.

Verses 119:137-144

18. TSADE: The power of the word unto righteousness. “I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts.” (V141) An individual is nothing without God and walking darkness. With God, one is upright and walking in the light.

Verses 119:145-152

19. QOF: The power of the word unto hope. “My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.” (V148) Prayers are offered up through pleading and tears while also recognizing that God is near.

Verses 119:153-160

20. RESH: The power of the word for overcoming. “The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.” (V160) Full trust in all that the Lord has revealed (not just a part of it) is the key to accessing the salvation He offers.

Verses 119:161-168

21. SHIN: The power of the word unto rest. “Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.” (V165) Even in the midst of persecution, continual prayer, meditation, and a joyful love for the Word provides a “peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7)

Verses 119:169-176

22. TAU/TAV: The power of the word for discernment. “Let my soul live that it may praise You, and let Your ordinances help me.” (V175) The psalmist prays for understanding and direction according to the commandments of God.

There is great power in the Word of God - Romans 1:16.

PSALMS 135-136

“The Great Hallel”

Two Psalms, 135 and 136 together, are known as “The Great Hallel.” It contains many beautifully expressed and concise statements about praising God can be found in this pairing. Traditionally, these were sung at the end of the Jewish Passover meal and were likely prayed by Jesus during the Last Supper with his disciples. It is difficult to read these Psalms without feeling moved to praise God alongside the psalmist.

Penman: Unknown
Classification / Genre: Pilgrimage Psalms
Poetic Device / Structure: Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference: Deuteronomy 7:6; Numbers 21:21-33

Psalms 135 and 136 are Pilgrimage Psalms. They are part of a special grouping of “Pilgrimage Psalms” (Psalms 120-136). These are a type of psalm that are believed to have been sung while worshippers traveled to Jerusalem and the Temple to participate in the annual feasts. Archeologists have discovered an ancient walkway leading from the Pool of Siloam up to the Temple Mount that has been dubbed, “The Pilgrim Road.” Perhaps the ancient Jews recited these psalms in their journey as they ascended the pathway.

Of the grouping of Pilgrimage Psalms, 135 and 136, are known as “The Great Hallel,” or the “Great Psalm of Praise.” The first word of the psalm, (*HALAL - H1984*) is a word that means, “to praise, commend, shout, boast, or celebrate.” Earlier in this study, we mentioned that Psalms 113-118 form a liturgical “Hallel,” also known as the “Egyptian Hallel.” The emphasis there was placed upon deliverance from Egypt. In the “Great Hallel,” the emphasis is upon Yahweh Himself. It is called the “Great Hallel” because it sings about God’s great love, mercy, and grace He has for His creation. It encourages the child of God to lift up joyful praise to Him for His steadfast love.

These psalms have a number of unique features:

1. They were written so that the entire congregation could participate. As the elder or priest would read the first line, the entire congregation would follow with the repeated line.
2. Nearly every verse references the words or concepts from another passage in the Old Testament. Some of the quotations are from other Psalms, as well as, passages in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Exodus. Each verse reflects or is echoed by other parts of Scripture. In addition, the psalm itself is also cited in other parts of the Old Testament.

3. In a beautifully poetic manner, these psalms include most (if not all) of the great events of Old Testament history.
4. They emphasize, more so than any other Psalms, God's covenant love (translated "lovingkindness" from the Hebrew word CHESED).
5. The repetitive phrase "for His mercy endures forever" is a cumbersome translation of the Hebrew, which has only six syllables and flows much more smoothly and quickly. One author has suggested "for His love has no end" as a substitute.

This course includes only summary information about the "Great Hallel" - Psalms 135-136. A verse-by-verse analysis will not be included. Comparisons of verses are highlighted below.

The poetic structures of these psalms are purposely connected. While each psalm stands on its own, as an individual composition, together they form a cohesive unit of praise. Many similarities exist between the two psalms, which also connects them. Consider the following comparisons:

OUTLINE OF PSALM 135

1. Above all gods (1-5)
2. He causes things (6-7)
3. Delivered from Egypt (8-9)
4. His name and fame (10-13)
5. The Lord has compassion (14)
6. Folly of idols (15-21)

OUTLINE OF PSALM 136

1. God of gods (1-3)
2. Creator (4-9)
3. Rescuer (10-16)
4. Victor (17-22)
5. Friend in need (23-25)
6. God of heaven (26)

A side by side comparison of the elements of Psalms 135 and 136 follow nearly point for point	
135:3 Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD!	136:1 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
135:5 For I know the Lord is great, and our Lord is above all gods.	136:2-3 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods ... Lord of lords ...

135:6 Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth (creates);	136:5-9 To Him who by wisdom made the heavens ... who laid the earth ... lights ... sun ... moon
135:8 He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, Both of man and beast.	136:10 To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, For His mercy endures forever;
135:9 He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.	136:11-15 And brought out Israel from among them ... overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea;
135:10-11 He defeated many nations and slew mighty kings— Sihon and Og and all the kingdoms of Canaan	136:17-20 To Him who struck down great kings ... and slew famous kings ... Sihon king of Amorites, ... And Og king of Bashan
135:12 And gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people.	136:21-22 And gave their land as a heritage, ... a heritage to Israel His servant;
135:14 For the LORD will judge His people, And He will have compassion on His servants.	136:23 Who remembered us in our lowly state,
135:21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!	136:26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.

Chiastic Structure of these psalms:

Some Bible students have suggested various poetic structures, for these psalms, including the following diagrams for the format of the compositions. As previously mentioned, it is impossible to know exactly what the penman intended when he wrote the Hebrew parallelisms. However, identifying the various corresponding elements throughout the composition and following the Hebrew poetry style, one can make an educated guess as to the structure.

One suggestion includes the 3 lines of Psalm 134 along with the “Great Hallel” (Psalms 135-136), connecting them as complete “A Song of Ascents” (Pilgrimage Psalm).

134:1 A Song of Ascents.

[A1] 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, And bless the LORD.

[B1] 135:1-18 Praises for God over idols, Creation, Exodus, and Defeated Enemies

[Axis] 135:21 **Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!**

[B2] 136:1-26 Praises for God over idols, Creation, Exodus, and Defeated Enemies

[A2] 136:26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.

Simple pivot chiasmus of Psalm 135:

[A] 135:1-3 Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the LORD

[B] 135:4-7 For I know that the LORD is great, (Creator)

[Axis] 135:8-12 **He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you**

[B'] 135:13-18 Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your fame...throughout all generations.

[A'] 135:19-21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!

Complex chiasmus of Psalm 136:

[A] 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!

[B] 4 To Him who does great wonders; made heavens

[C] 10 To Him who struck Egypt

[D] 13 To Him which divided the Red sea into parts:

[E] 16 To Him who led His people through wilderness

[F] 17 To Him who struck down great kings;

[A'] 23 Who remembered us in our lowly state; 26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever

(There is only one paragraph division in Psalm 136, the strong division is at the conclusion to the psalm.)

PSALM 139

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

This psalm is one of the most beloved of the psalter. It teaches the reader about God's divine attributes. With poetic descriptions of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, the psalmist makes application to the Lord's relationship with mankind. From these, he draws an immense sense of hope and security during times of adversity and persecution. The same appeal remains relevant to the modern reader.

Penman: David
Classification / Genre: Didactic and Psalm of Lament
Poetic Device / Structure: Simple Pivot, or Complex Chiasmus
Bible Citation / Reference:

Psalm 139 provides a relational perspective of God. The psalmist teaches us several characteristics of the nature of God, classifying this psalm as a Didactic Psalm. Some of the key ideas drawn from the composition are: (a) God has an intimate knowledge of His creation, mankind; (b) God searches man's ways as a perfect judge; and (c) God's scrutiny of man gives the righteous confidence in doing what is right. To summarize all of these points together, is to say, "God is a personal God."

In fact, at the heart of the Book of Psalms is the personal God of Israel. This is evidenced in that:

1. The Psalmists never tire of praising God as creator, sustainer, lawgiver, ruler, vindicator, and judge.
2. The personality of God is presented in such concrete and realistic terms that those who read these poems know that the penmen trusted in the Lord and took refuge in Him. His divine attributes are emphasized throughout the book, for example:
 - a. His justice (Psalm 5).
 - b. His forgiving nature (Psalm 51).
 - c. His loving care for His people (Psalm 23).
 - d. His goodness (Psalm 103).
 - e. He is omniscient (Psalm 139:1-6).
 - f. He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12).
 - g. He is omnipotent (Psalm 139:13-18).
 - h. He is infinite in righteousness (Psalm 139:19-24).
3. The direct and earnest prayers the psalmists prayed were natural outpourings of hearts which were intimate with the Almighty.

Psalm 139 can also be classified as a Psalm of Lament because the psalmist is pleading with the Lord during a time of anxiety and darkness. The writing is marked by

ambivalence; on one hand, the psalmist marvels at God's divine nature, while on the other, the same attributes of His vast knowledge, presence, and power can seem intimidating and oppressive. Viewing the psalm through this lens clarifies the final verses: "God, examine my heart. Know its contents. Test me. You understand me far better than I understand myself! I am truly loyal to you and detest those who oppose you!" (vss. 19-24).

Psalm 139 has a diverse poetic structure. As with many of the psalms, there are several ways to analyze the structure of composition. The psalm is commonly divided into an outline of four sections (or strophes), highlighting the attributes of God (included in the text analysis below). This is the most prominent and identifiable structure. However, the psalm was written in the classical Hebrew poetic style of parallelisms. Identifying the pairings has/can result in many different ideas concerning the chiasmic structure. Bible students have dissected the psalm into both a simple pivot chiasmus and a complex chiasmus framework. Depending on one's perspective, the complex chiasmus structure has been presented with sub-chiasmus parts and without.

Summary proposal A: Simple Pivot Chiasmus of Psalm 139

[A] 1-5 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

[B] 7-11 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

[X] 13-14 **For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.**

[B'] 15-16 My frame was not hidden from You, Your eyes saw my substance

[A'] 17-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Summary proposal B: Complex Chiasmus of Psalm 139:

[A] 1 Searched and known

[B] 2-3 David's thoughts and ways

[C] 4 His words

[D] 5 God actions towards him

[E] 6 God's knowledge

[F] 7-12 God can see him

[F'] 13-16 God knows him

[E'] 17-18 God's thoughts

[D'] 19 God actions towards the wicked

[C'] 20 The words of the wicked

[B'] 21-22 David's thoughts and ways

[A'] 23-24 Search and know

SECTION ONE: GOD'S OMNISCIENCE (1-6).

[A] 139:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

a) "A Psalm of David"

(1) Psalm 139 is part of the last collection of Dravidic psalms in the psalter (Psalms 138-145). While there are some scholars who debate whether it was actually written by the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1), most attribute the writing to David. However, most scholars concede that it is impossible to know exactly who wrote it, when, or why it was written.

b) "Searched" is a word often used for digging for precious metals. The result of God's research is conclusive for David says that God has "known him."

c) The words "known me" include the Hebrew verb, *YADA* (*H3045*), which occurs seven times throughout the composition, in verses 1, 2, 4, 6, 14, and 23 (2 times). It appears to emphasize the personal relationship between the psalmist and Yahweh - it is a "You-me" type connection. This correlation between the Creator and His creation is a central theme of the poem.

[B] 139:2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

- a) "Sit down" equals a passive movement; "rise up" demonstrates an active movement, thus illustrating that God knows everything we do. There is nothing one does, says, thinks, or feels that God misses. He has a complete knowledge of our entire existence and being.
- b) When David says God understands his thoughts "from afar" he perhaps means (1) from heaven, or (2) God knows his thoughts even before he thinks them.

[C] 139:4 For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

- a) God knows what a man will say before the man himself knows what he will say. Thus, He knows man better than man knows himself. It is this complete knowledge that makes God uniquely qualified to be the judge of all mankind (cf. James 4:11-12; Hebrews 4:13).

[D] 139:5 You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.

- a) God does not just passively observe the things we do in our lives, He is involved. His "hand" is indicative of His loving care and protection.

[E] 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

- a) David correctly concludes that his knowledge is no match for God's. Thus, he will not try to out-think or out-reason God. The logical conclusion of such a point is that man will openly accept all God teaches simply because He knows so much more than any man.
- b) The word ascribed to God's infinite knowledge is "omniscience" (all-knowing). These first six lines describe the character of God by using phrases such as, "You know, understand, comprehend, are acquainted, have knowledge." All emphasize the superiority of God's mind to mankind. Indeed, God Himself said, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

SECTION TWO: GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE (7-12).

[F] 139:7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the

uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

a) "Where can I go from Your Spirit?"

(1) David knows that as a spirit-being, God does not have the limitations of human flesh and blood. Being a spirit, He is in every place. Thus, anywhere David might try to go to get away from God would be a foolish (and vain) attempt.

(2) As in verse 8 if he were to go up high (wings of dawn) or low (remotest part of the sea) God would still be present.

b) How does David view God's omnipresence? As a source of fear and dread? Not at all! To him it is a source of comfort that God will always be with him. Such knowledge gave David the confidence to proceed into the unknown with boldness.

(1) David attempts to illustrate his point of God being all-present. Let us assume it was pitch black outside, a darkness we had never before experienced. Would God equally be limited with the absence of any light? "No," David says. God sees as well in the blackness as He does in the light.

(2) We would do well to remember this point! Adam and Eve tried to hide from God and men have attempted to do so ever since. Yet, such is futile. Since God clearly sees all we should live in such a way as to welcome His careful examination of our lives (cf. vss. 23-24).

SECTION THREE: GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE (13-16).

[F'] 139:13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

a) "You formed my inward parts"

(1) God's power is such that he was able to form all of David, from his emotional makeup (inward parts/kidneys) or perhaps, meaning here, his

complicated physical body. When he notes how God “weaved” him, it illustrates the intricate handiwork and craftsmanship of God.

- (2) As one gives serious consideration to the wonders of the human body, one is left with a singular, inescapable conclusion - it was designed by a supreme designer!
 - (3) Even in the darkness of the womb (the “depths of the earth”) David acknowledges that God somehow was able to skillfully construct his body (literally “embroider”).
- b) God’s knowledge of man extends to the days even before conception. This knowledge is used by God to make plans for the individual. The Bible teaches that God did, at times, plan an individual’s life to enable him to serve God’s divine purposes (Jeremiah 1:5; Acts 9:15; Galatians 1:15-16). Yet, the Bible also makes clear that one can exercise his own free will in disrespect to the plans God may have had for his life (Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2-3; Proverbs 3:1-2; 4:10; 9:10-11; 10:27).
- c) “Marvelous are Your works”
- (1) These six verses, in which the psalmist acknowledges God as Creator, emphasize the infinite power of God. He is omnipotent; all-powerful. There is no power greater than Yahweh. Just by speaking, He created the universe and all that is in it. He is the supreme being, as the Greek philosopher Aristotle concluded, “the unmoved Mover,” meaning the One with the power to put all things in motion.

SECTION FOUR: GOD’S INFINITE RIGHTEOUSNESS (17-24).

[E’] 139:17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.

- a) David is thankful to know of God’s thoughts (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13). He knows God’s thoughts far outnumber his own. It truly is a blessing to have God reveal His thoughts to us in His word. Whereas He knows everything we think, we know nothing of His thoughts outside of what He has revealed.
- (1) Moses elaborated the same idea in Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, **but those things which are revealed** belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.
 - (2) Indeed, when one reads the Bible - the inspired, revealed word of God - one can’t help but marvel at the wisdom, power, and presence of God. He is infinitely righteous!

- a) It is unclear as to what David means by this last phrase, “when I awake, I am still with Thee.” Perhaps the thought is that when he goes to sleep he is numbering God’s great attributes and, when he wakes up he still has thousands to count. Or he may be saying that he remains in God’s presence even though he has been in a deep sleep for many hours (and God could have left him).

[D’] 139:19 Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

- a) In thinking of God’s greatness, David’s thoughts go to those who willingly oppose Him. He wishes that God would display His awesome power against the wicked. Also, he personally wishes the wicked would leave him alone.

[C’] 139:20 For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain.

- a) David’s righteousness is seen here. He is truly disturbed when men foolishly say things against God. How do we react when others take God’s name in vain?

[B’] 139:21 Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.

- a) David harbors no personal malice toward anyone, even the wicked. Yet, he does not care for those who oppose God. David does not fellowship with those who are not on God’s side (see notes on Psalm 1; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
- b) David’s feelings towards God’s enemies run deep. It is not being hypercritical. He is truly offended, hurt and upset by what others are doing. He does not like them or what they do. It truly is a sign of righteousness to love what God loves and hate what God hates (Rom 12:9).

[A’] 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- a) In contrast to the wicked, David sincerely wants to be known by God and wants to be right with God. David has no fear of inviting God to examine him. He knows that God will find a soul sincerely trying to do what is right.
- b) If God’s examination should yield some weaknesses in David’s character, he invites God to lead him to yet higher levels of righteousness.

APPENDICES

Chart 1 - Book Divisions of the Hebrew Bible

“... written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms ...” (Luke 24:44)

THE LAW (TORAH)		THE PROPHETS (NEVI'IM)		THE WRITINGS (KETUVIM)	
<i>The "Torah"</i>	Genesis	<i>Former Prophets</i>	Joshua	<i>Truth (Poetry)</i>	Psalms
	Exodus		Judges		Job
	Leviticus		1-2 Samuel		Proverbs
	Numbers		1-2 Kings	<i>Five Scrolls</i>	Ruth
	Deuteronomy	<i>Latter Prophets</i>	Isaiah		Song of Solomon
	Jeremiah		Ecclesiastes		
	Ezekiel		Lamentations		
	The Twelve		Esther		
			<i>History</i>	Daniel	
				Ezra-Nehemiah	
				1-2 Chronicles	

Chart 2 - Classifications of the Psalms

The Psalms can be categorized into different genres or types - from as many as 15 to as few as four groups.

For this course, we will be using six classifications. The six classifications are placed in the order in which they first appear in the Book of Psalms.

WISDOM / DIDACTIC PSALMS	MESSIANIC / ROYAL PSALMS	PSALMS OF LAMENT	IMPRECATORY PSALMS	PRAISE / THANKSGIVING	PILGRIMAGE PSALMS
Precept psalms For teaching, guidelines for life, edification, warnings. Contrast the righteous with the wicked.	Throne psalms Davidic reign God's reign & sovereignty. Image of thrones coronations, and processions. Prophetic ref. to the Anointed.	Complaint psalm Cries for help in times of distress Prayers for deliverance. Penitential – express sorrow, human struggle, remorse over sin.	Avenge psalm Asking for judgment, vengeance upon wicked, or enemies.	“Nature” psalm Gratitude for what God did for His people. Expresses joy, celebration, blessings, exalting name, glorifying God.	“Psalms of Ascent” Recall God's goodness and provision. Sung together during journey to Temple in Jerusalem.
10 Psalms	28 Psalms	66 Psalms	22 Psalms	31 Psalms	32 Psalms

Book I	<u>1</u>, 19, 37	<u>2</u>, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 29, 34, 35, 38	<u>3</u>, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41	<u>5</u>, 11, 16, 23, 26, 27, 32, 35	<u>8</u>, 18, 19, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 40	<u>15</u>, 24, 26
Book II	49	45, 47, 72	42, 43, 44, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 69, 70, 71	55, 59, 62, 63, 69	46, 65, 66, 67	46, 48, 50, 68
Book III	73	78, 80, 89	73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86, 88	79, 83, 88	75	76, 78, 81, 82, 84, 87

Book IV		93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101	90, 94, 102	91	92, 100, 103, 104	105, 106
Book V	112, 119, 127, 128, 133, 139	109, 110, 118, 132, 144	108, 109, 120, 123, 126, 129, 130, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143	109, 120, 121, 130, 131	107, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 124, 138, 145- 150	115, 120- 136

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: DIDACTIC/WISDOM PSALMS

Didactic means “intended for teaching, providing moral instruction, guidelines for life, edification, or warnings.” This type of psalms is also sometimes called “Wisdom, or Precept Psalms.” They are also referred to as “Torah Psalms” meaning they point to the Lord’s commands or precepts. They are generally directed toward man (rather than to God) for purposes of edification and often contrast the righteous against the wicked.

Topics treated in Didactic Psalms:

- A. Knowledge (19, 119) and fear (112, 128) of the Lord coupled with obedience.
- B. Contrast between righteous and wicked (1, 14, 36).
- C. Trust in God (49, 91).
- D. Justice in society (52, 82).
- E. Brotherhood among men (127, 133).

Didactic or Wisdom psalms provide both physical and spiritual instruction. They serve to aid the student in understanding a number of troubling events (prosperity of the wicked, the suffering of the righteous) and in obtaining a better grasp of God and His works (with man, nature, nations, kings, and history).

While the various literary categories of the Psalms can sometimes overlap (with some psalms difficult to classify because they could fit into more than one genre), in this study, we suggest the following 10 psalms as being predominantly Didactic/Wisdom Psalms: 1, 19, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 133

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: MESSIANIC/ROYAL PSALMS

Messianic, or Royal Psalms are sometimes called “Throne Psalms.” Many were composed during, or refer to, the Davidic kingdom. They emphasize God’s eternal reign and sovereignty and include images of thrones, coronations, and royal processions. A large portion are prophetic references to the Christ.

The thematic elements of this genre of psalms generally emphasize the following points concerning the coming Messiah.

He is the anointed King.

- Appointed by God and reigns on behalf of God whose throne is in the heavens (2:4).
- Has a holy status and has been empowered for His task (89:20 ff.).
- Is over/above all (8:6).
- Is zealous to do God’s will and pays the price for that zeal (69:9).

- Will be a priest/king (110:1-4).
- Will be rejected by men (118:22).

He is the “Son” of God (2:7).

He is God Himself (45:6 = Heb 1:8). the Lord (102:25 ff.).

He is the Servant of the Lord (69).

He is the Victor (68:17, 18 = Ephesians 4:8).

The Psalms (particularly Messianic Psalms) and Isaiah are the most quoted Old Testament books. The most quoted Psalms are: 2, 8, 16, 22, 34, 69, 110, and 118. Messianic Psalms are especially significant for Christians because they provide much background information about and find their fulfillment in the New Testament pertaining to our Lord Jesus Christ. Examples are found in the following:

“For David says of him ...” (Acts 2:25-28 = Psalm 16:8-11)

“For it was not David who ascended into Heaven, but he himself says ...” (Acts 2:34-35 = Psalm 110:1).

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: PSALMS OF LAMENT

This particular style of psalm is considered to be the most common genre of the Psalms, comprising approximately 66 psalms. Psalms of Lament may also be considered “Complaint Psalms” because they typically include cries for help in times of distress. They are prayers asking for deliverance, or can be penitential – that is, expressing sorrow, human struggles, or remorse over sin.

Sometimes this genre of psalms is divided into two sub-categories: Community (or national) perspective and Individual perspective. These psalms can also include elements of the other classifications, such as thanksgiving after the lament is resolved by God.

The Psalms of Lament typically have the following elements or forms:

- A. An initial calling upon the Lord;
- B. A complaint, specifying the occasion giving rise to the lament;
- C. A prayer requesting the Lord to hear and respond with respect to the source of the lament;
- D. The expression of wishes or desires concerning the fate of friends or enemies;
- E. The grounds upon which the appeal to God is based; and
- F. A concluding expression of confidence that the appeal will be heard and responded to by God.

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: IMPRECATORY PSALMS

“Imprecatory” means “spoken curses.” These psalms are also known as “Avenge Psalms.” They ask for judgment, or vengeance, upon the wicked and one’s enemies. It is a poetic style of psalm that is written as curses and is considered to be the most difficult to explain. The Book of Psalms includes approximately 22 Imprecatory Psalms. However, there are no psalms that are entirely imprecatory.

Imprecatory Psalms are those that involve appealing to God for:

- A.** Judgment upon the wicked
- B.** A curse upon / if rebellious
- C.** Destruction of adversaries

Several scholars consider the imprecatory psalms to be the most difficult to teach or rationalize out of all the Bible. It is difficult, they argue, to justify prayers that call for the destruction of others, especially in light of Jesus’ teachings (cf. Mt 5:44 - “love your enemies”). However, we must never downplay or sugar-coat this type of psalm, as it involves praying for complete judgment against the wicked while ensuring the protection of the righteous. According to the Bible, that is exactly what will take place on Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:12-15). Let us never become entirely too sensitive, or so overly sentimental that we can no longer accept the truth about the final judgment itself. That is a dangerous position for a soul to be. A good understanding of the Imprecatory Psalms can help us in our own walk of faith.

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: PSALMS OF PRAISE / THANKSGIVING

Psalms of Praise, or Thanksgiving are also sometimes referred to as “Nature psalms.” They contain gratitude for what God has done for His people. They express joy, celebration, blessings, exalting God’s name, and glorifying Him. There are approximately 31 Psalms that can be easily identified within this genre. Some of them include the following:

- A.** Hymns celebrating God as Creator (8, 19, 29, 104).
- B.** Hymns of sacred history (78, 81, 105, 106, 111, 114, 135-136).
- C.** Hymns of the kingdom (24, 47, 68, 75, 93, 95-100).
- D.** Hymns of Zion (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, 137).
- E.** Mixed hymns (33, 103, 115, 133, 145-150).

The psalmists of ancient Israel found many reasons to praise God. Their praise psalms and hymns usually contained the following features and structure:

- A.** An introduction - which invites people to come and praise God, Who is worthy. The invitation might be offered to:
 - 1. The congregation in the sanctuary,
 - 2. To Choirs or

3. To some person or group.
- B. A main section - giving the grounds for praise:
1. God's great attributes,
 2. His holy word,
 3. His virtues (such as his lovingkindness and compassion), or
 4. His mighty acts (such as his salvation on behalf of Israel or his great work in creation).
- C. A conclusion - which repeats why this psalm of praise was a worthy and logical thing to do.

PSALMS CLASSIFICATION STUDY: PILGRIMAGE PSALMS

Pilgrimage Psalms are a specialty type of psalm also called "Ascent psalms." These psalms were a special type of hymn or poem sung during public worship. It is believed that Pilgrimage Psalms were chanted or sung out while the Israelites made their way to Jerusalem for the annual Jewish feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16-17) or while ascending to and entering the Temple. There are 32 psalms that can be classified as Pilgrimage Psalms. Book V of the Psalms contains a grouping of this genre in Psalms 120-136.

A great example of a Pilgrimage Psalm is Psalm 15. It has been suggested that David composed this psalm in association with transporting the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. As he and the entourage ascended to the city and the Ark was placed in the tent he had prepared (2 Samuel 16:17), perhaps it motivated the thought for this psalm.

Chart 3 - Bible Time Periods

The Bible can be subdivided into approximately 15 time periods, or phases, of history. The Book of Psalms contains material that covers seven of the fifteen periods. It is the only book of the Bible with such a wide range for the date of writing.

	Period or Phase	Date	Bible Reference
1	ANTE-DILUVIAN* PHASE	Creation–2349 B.C.	Genesis 1:1-8:12
2	POST-DILUVIAN PHASE	- 1921 B.C.	Genesis 8:13-11:26
3	PATRIARCH PHASE	- 1706 B.C.	Genesis 11:26-46:7
4	EGYPTIAN BONDAGE	- 1491 B.C.	Genesis 46:8-Exodus 14:31
5	WILDERNESS WANDERING	- 1450 B.C.	Exodus 15:1-Josh. 3:17
6	CONQUEST OF CANAAN	- 1430 B.C.	Joshua 4:1-Judges 3:9
7	THE JUDGES	- 1095 B.C.	Judges 3:10-1 Samuel 10:17
8	UNITED KINGDOM	- 975 B.C.	1 Samuel 11:1-1 Kings 11:43
9	DIVIDED KINGDOM	- 721 B.C.	1 Kings 12:1-2 Kings 17:41
10	JUDAH ALONE	- 586 B.C.	2 Kings 18:1-25:30
11	BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY	- 536 B.C.	2 Chronicles 36:22-Ezra 1:4
12	THE RESTORATION	- 432 B.C.	Ezra 1:1-Nehemiah 13:31
13	BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS	- 5 B.C.	
14	COMING OF IMMANUEL	- 29/30 A.D.	Matthew-John
15	THE CHURCH	- Current	Acts 2:1–Revelation 22:21

* *“Diluvian” means “connected with a deluge, especially with the great Flood described in Genesis.”*

Chart 4 - New Testament Citations of the Psalms

Psalm	Verse	NT Citation
2	1, 2	Acts 4:25, 26
2	7	Acts 13:33
2	9	Revelations 2:27
4	4	Ephesians 4:26
5	10	Romans 3:13
8	3	Matthew 21:16
8	5	Hebrews 2:6
8	6	1 Corinthians 15:9
10	7	Romans 3:14
14	1	Romans 3:10
16	8	Acts 2:25
18	50	Romans 15:9
19	5	Romans 10:18
22	2	Matthew 27:46
22	19	Matthew 27:35
22	19	John 19:24
22	23	Hebrews 2:12
24	1	1 Corinthians 10:26
32	1, 2	Romans 4:7, 8
34	13	1 Peter 3:10
35	19	John 15:25
36	2	Romans 3:18
40	7	Hebrews 10:5
41	9	John 13:18
44	22	Romans 8:36

Psalm	Verse	NT Citation
69	10	Romans 15:3
69	10	John 2:17
69	10	Romans 11:9,10
69	26	Acts 1:20
78	2	Matthew 13:35
78	24	John 6:31
82	6	John 10:34
89	20	Acts 13:22
90	1	Matthew 22:44
91	11, 12	Matthew 4:6
94	11	1 Corinthians 3:20
95	7	Hebrews 3:7
97	7	Hebrews 1:6
98	22	Matthew 21:42
102	25	Hebrews 1:10
104	4	Hebrews 1:7
109	3	John 15:25
109	8	Acts 1:20
110	1	Matthew 22:44
110	1	Mark 12:36
110	1	Acts 2:34-37
110	4	Hebrews 5:6
112	9	2 Corinthians 9:9
116	10	2 Corinthians 4:13
117	1	Romans 15:11

Psalm	Verse	NT Citation
45	7, 8	Hebrews 1:8, 9
51	6	Romans 3:4
68	19	Ephesians 4:8

Psalm	Verse	NT Citation
118	6	Hebrews 13:6
118	22, 23	Matthew 21:42
118	26	Matthew 21:9
140	4	Romans 3:13

Chart 5 - Jesus in the Psalms

The Book of Psalms often speaks of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Here are a few of the references and their fulfillment in the New Testament.

PSALM	PORTRAYAL	N.T. REFERENCE
2:7	The Son of God	Matthew 3:17
8:2	Praised by children	Matthew 21:15,16
8:6	Ruler of all	Hebrews 2:8
16:10	Rises from the dead	Matthew 28:7
22:11	Forsaken by God	Matthew 27:46
22:7,8	Derided by enemies	Luke 23:35
22:16	Hands and feet pierced	John 20:27
22:18	Lots cast for clothes	Matthew 27:35,36
34:20	Bones unbroken	John 19:32-36
35:11	Accused by false witnesses	Mark 14:57
35:19	Hated without cause	John 15:25
40:7,8	Delights in God's will	Hebrews 10:7
41:9	Betrayed by a friend	Luke 22:47
45:6	The eternal King	Hebrews 1:8
68:18	Ascends to heaven	Acts 1:9-11
69:9	Zealous for God's house	John 2:17
69:21	Given vinegar and gall	Matthew 27:34
109:4	Prays for enemies	Luke 23:34
109:8	His betrayer replaced	Acts 1:20
110:1	Rules over His enemies	Matthew 22:44
110:4	A priest forever	Hebrews 5:6
118:22	The chief stone of God's building	Matthew 21:42
118:26	He comes in the name of the Lord	Matthew 21:9

Chart 6 - Important Technical Terms in the Psalms

1. The writers of Psalms incorporated several technical terms in their compositions that are related to music. The meaning of many of these musical terms is uncertain, thus, most Bibles do not attempt to translate the terms but instead will transliterate the Hebrew word into English.
2. The many musical terms that were important for those who originally played and sang these sacred tunes. Though the meaning of some of these terms has been lost, we can appreciate their importance and consider how God has used and continues to use these songs to the praise of His glory.
3. The following list are several of the technical terms used throughout the Psalms, grouped together in purpose, and our general understanding of them:

CLASSIFICATIONS	
<i>Maskil</i>	(also spelled Maschil) has been translated as “a contemplation” (NKJV), “a well-written song” (NET Bible), “an instruction” (YLT), or “prudent” (ESV). It occurs 13 times in the Psalms. See Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52—55, 74, 78, 88—89, and 142. It is also found in Amos 5:13.
<i>Mizmor</i>	a word meaning “melody of praise.” It is a term for a song that is accompanied by a musical instrument (found in 57 Psalms).
<i>Shir</i>	means “the flow of speech,” it is a general term for vocal music (found in 27 Psalms).
<i>Hallel Psalms</i>	(Psalms 146-150) were for more general use in worship.
<i>Song of Ascents</i>	(Psalms 120-134) Probably refers to the pilgrimage up to Jerusalem or the processional ascent up to the Temple (cf. Is 30:29). These were sung primarily during the Feast of Tabernacles.
INTERJECTIONS	
<i>Higgaion</i>	The meaning of this word is uncertain, with some suggesting it also refers to a musical interlude. The KJV translates it as “solemn sound” in Psalm 92:3.
<i>Selah</i>	Most frequently used musical term in the Psalms, occurring 71 times. Most scholars believe it refers to a pause or silence. Some Bibles translate it as “interlude.” Many have suggested the term implies that one should stop for a moment and reflect on what has

		been said in light of God's glory. See Psalms 3,4,7, 24, and 32 as examples. Selah is also found in Habakkuk 3
LITURGICAL NOTES (Used in worship)		
	<i>Alamoth</i>	It has been suggested the term refers to the music's pitch being high or soprano, since it refers to young women or virgins, but the actual meaning of this word is uncertain. (Ps 46:1).
	<i>Gittith</i>	Several meanings have been suggested, including "tune from Gath" and "song from the grape harvest." Psalm 81:1.
	<i>Mahalath</i>	most likely refers to an unidentified song tune or to a certain style of playing it. Ps 53:1.
	<i>Miktam</i>	is a technical word used that has uncertain meaning to us. Psalm 59:1.
	<i>Muth-labben</i>	has been translated as "to die for the son," which could be the title of the tune used to accompany the song. However, the exact musical use of this term is uncertain. Ps 9:1.
	<i>Sheminith</i>	is a musical term that refers to a musical instrument, possibly an eight-string lyre. Psalm 6:1 and can also be found in 1 Chronicles 15:21.
	<i>Shiggaion</i>	is thought to mean "dirge" or "rapid change of rhythm," but we are uncertain as to its exact meaning. See Psalm 7:1.
	<i>To Choir Leader</i>	provides special instruction concerning speed, inflection and other stylistic concerns.

Chart 7 - A General Outline of the Psalms

Below is an overall view, or "general outline" of the Book of Psalms* [titles, or themes for each psalm]:

First Book (Psalms 1-41): Separation of the Just from the Unjust

Psalm 1	The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked
Psalm 2	The Reign of the Lord's Anointed
Psalm 3	David's Confidence in the Unchangeable God
Psalm 4	David's Confidence in the Special Care of God
Psalm 5	Yahweh Hears the Cry of His People
Psalm 6	Plea for Mercy
Psalm 7	Prayer for Just Punishment of the Oppressor
Psalm 8	Reign of the Son of Man
Psalm 9	Praising God for Victory over the Enemies
Psalm 10	Plea for Salvation from the Wicked
Psalm 11	The Just in the Midst of Wickedness
Psalm 12	The Confidence of the Just in the Midst of Wickedness
Psalm 13	The Confidence of the Just in the Midst of Wickedness
Psalm 14	General Ruin of Mankind
Psalm 15	Who Shall Dwell on Your Holy Hill?
Psalm 16	Christ as Perfect Man
Psalm 17	Prayer of the Just for Protection
Psalm 18	The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress
Psalm 19	The Law of the Lord Is Perfect
Psalm 20	Help from the Sanctuary
Psalm 21	Royal Song of Victory
Psalm 22	Christ's Sufferings and Glory (The Cross)
Psalm 23	Christ, the Good Shepherd (The Crook)
Psalm 24	Christ, the King of Glory (The Crown)
Psalm 25	Plea for Salvation and Forgiveness
Psalm 26	Prayer of an Upright Man
Psalm 27	Desire for God's Presence
Psalm 28	Cry in Distress
Psalm 29	God's Might is Above Everything
Psalm 30	Praise for God's Help
Psalm 31	Salvation from the Enemy
Psalm 32	Blessing of Forgiveness
Psalm 33	Worship of the Creator
Psalm 34	I Will Teach You the Fear of the LORD
Psalm 35	Cry for Help of the One in Distress

Psalm 36	Mind of the Wicked and the Goodness of God
Psalm 37	Confidence in God in the midst of a Wicked World
Psalm 38	Sufferings of the Believers for their Sins
Psalm 39	Every Man is Vanity
Psalm 40	Christ the Obedient Servant of God
Psalm 41	Confidence, Betrayal and Triumph

Second Book (Psalms 42-72): The Sufferings of the Just

Psalm 42	Desire of the Just for God
Psalm 43	Continuation of Psalms 42
Psalm 44	The People of God in Distress Cry for God
Psalm 45	Christ, King and Bridegroom
Psalm 46	God is Refuge and Strength
Psalm 47	God's Reign as King
Psalm 48	The City of God
Psalm 49	Vanity of Earthly Riches
Psalm 50	The Just Judgment of God
Psalm 51	Confession of Sins and Repentance
Psalm 52	Condemnation of the Wicked
Psalm 53	Apostasy of the Wicked
Psalm 54	The Cry of the God-fearing for Salvation
Psalm 56	Confidence in the Faithfulness of God
Psalm 57	Confidence in the Salvation of God
Psalm 58	God Reveals Himself in Judgment
Psalm 59	Help for the Helpless
Psalm 60	Lamentation in Great Distress
Psalm 61	God is the True Refuge
Psalm 62	God Only Saves
Psalm 63	Thirst for God
Psalm 64	The Fate of the Enemies
Psalm 65	The Rich Blessing of God
Psalm 66	Acknowledgement of Just Intervention of God
Psalm 67	Outlook on the Blessing
Psalm 68	Liberation is Accomplished
Psalm 69	Lamentation of the Rejected Messiah
Psalm 70	Cry for Salvation
Psalm 71	Revival of People of God
Psalm 72	Announcement of Reign of Peace

Third Book (Psalms 73-89): Return of the People and God's Goodness

Psalm 73	An Enigma and its Solution
Psalm 74	Destruction of the Sanctuary
Psalm 75	God's Coming into Action by Judgment
Psalm 76	Victorious Might of God
Psalm 77	Retrospect in Faith
Psalm 78	God's Dealings in the History of Israel
Psalm 79	Prayer at Destruction of Jerusalem
Psalm 80	Prayer of the People in Their Distress
Psalm 81	The People Gather Fresh Hope
Psalm 82	God's Judgment of the Judges
Psalm 83	Prayer at the Attack of the Enemy
Psalm 84	Taking Pleasure in the Sanctuary of Yahweh
Psalm 85	The People of God Enjoy the Promised Blessing
Psalm 86	The God-fearing Soul in Humble Prayer to God (Only Psalm of David in the third book.)
Psalm 87	Zion, the City of God
Psalm 88	A Prayer Coming from Deepest Distress
Psalm 89	Covenant of God and His Faithfulness

Fourth Book (Psalms 90-106): Yahweh's Kingdom

Psalm 90	The Eternal God and Mortal Men (of Moses; probably the oldest Psalm)
Psalm 91	Exemplary Confidence of Man In God
Psalm 92	Song of Praise in the Sanctuary
Psalm 93	Yahweh Reigns in Majesty
Psalm 94	Cry for Justice and Vengeance
Psalm 95	Praise of Yahweh as Creator and Savior of His People
Psalm 96	Praise of Yahweh as Creator and Judge of the Earth
Psalm 97	Appearing of Yahweh as King
Psalm 98	Praise of Yahweh, the King
Psalm 99	Yahweh's Reign
Psalm 100	Worldwide Worship of Yahweh
Psalm 101	Principles of Yahweh's Government
Psalm 102	God Revealed in Flesh
Psalm 103	Israel's Praise over Ways of God
Psalm 104	Praise of Creator-God
Psalm 105	Historical Retrospective: God's Faithfulness toward Israel
Psalm 106	Historical Retrospective: Israel's Unfaithfulness toward God

Fifth Book (Psalms 107-150): Summary of Yahweh's Ways with His People

Psalm 107	Yahweh Saves Out of Every Difficulty
Psalm 108	The Coming Salvation
Psalm 109	Hostility to Christ
Psalm 110	Christ as Priest and King (Frequently quoted Psalm in the NT.)
Psalm 111	Praise of the Wonderful Works of Yahweh
Psalm 112	Yahweh's Blessing for the God-fearing
Psalm 113	Praise of the Name of Yahweh
Psalm 114	The Might of the God of Jacob
Psalm 115	Honor Is Due to God Only
Psalm 116	Praise of God for His Help in Distress
Psalm 117	Praise of the Nations (The shortest Psalm.)
Psalm 118	Israel Recognizes the True Corner-stone (Frequently quoted Psalm in the NT.)
Psalm 119	Praise of the Word of God (the longest Psalm)
Psalm 120	Solemnity of the God-fearing
Psalm 121	God as Protector of Israel
Psalm 122	House and City of God
Psalm 123	Israel's Fountain of Help
Psalm 124	Salvation in Distress
Psalm 125	Perfect Security
Psalm 126	Sowing in Tears and Reaping with Rejoicing
Psalm 127	Blessing over the House
Psalm 128	Blessing over the Family
Psalm 129	God's Mighty Hand
Psalm 130	Repentance and Forgiveness
Psalm 131	Rest and Satisfaction
Psalm 132	Habitation of Yahweh in Zion
Psalm 133	Blessing of Brotherly Fellowship
Psalm 134	Worship in the Sanctuary
Psalm 135	Knowing and Worshiping the True God
Psalm 136	Praise of God's Eternal Mercy (135-136: The Great Hallel)
Psalm 137	Reminiscences of the Exile
Psalm 138	Praise of God for His Salvation
Psalm 139	Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart
Psalm 140	Yahweh, the Fountain of Help for the Just
Psalm 141	Prayer of the Just amidst the Wicked
Psalm 142	Yahweh, the Refuge of the Lonely Ones
Psalm 143	Prayer out of Deepest Distress
Psalm 144	The True Fountain of Strength
Psalm 145	Praise of God
Psalm 146	Personal Praise of the Just
Psalm 147	Praise of the People of God

Psalm 148 Praise of the Whole Creation
Psalm 149 Praise by a New Song
Psalm 150 End: Summary of God's Praises

* Source: copied and adapted from *Burton Coffman, Commentary on Psalms / borrowed from Arend Remmers*

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/psalms.html>
<https://biblecentre.org/content.php?mode=7&item=136>

STUDY: PSALM 34 TRANSLITERATED ACROSTIC

Translating the Psalms from Hebrew into English is a challenging task and typically involves the loss of many subtle distinctions in the poetry due to the absence of equivalent wording between the two languages. The distinct verb conjugations, word structure, and word order of English further complicate the process. For instance, translating the poetic structure of a Hebrew acrostic directly into English is virtually impossible. However, with a little creativity and poetic license, it is possible to transliterate the Hebrew words and thoughts into the English language. This approach gives us a sense of the original text. Below is an example of one such interpretation effort.

Hebrew Letter	Verse	Transliterated English wording to match the Hebrew poetic acrostic
Aleph	1	As I kneel before the Lord, blessing Him at all time; I will praise with my lips, in hymns fitted with rhyme.
Bet	2	Boast in the Lord, with all of my soul; the lowly will hear, and be brightened from woe.
Gimel	3	Great is the Lord, His grandeur proclaimed; and let us together, exalt His great name!
Dalet	4	Daily seeking the Lord, He kept me in sight; snatching me safe, from every fright.
He	5	How we look to Him, and are sparkling and bright; Verily never, dismayed in His sight.
Zayin	6	Zealously I cried, and the Lord heard; setting me free, when each trouble occurred.
Chet	7	Chosen by God, His angel camps near; stripping off woe, for the Lord do we fear.
Tet	8	Taste and see, of the Lord and His grace; happy and valiant, we flee to His face.
Yod	9	You His saints, the Lord we adore; for we never lack, as in awe He gives more.
Kaf	10	Kingly young lions lack, hungry for food; we follow the Lord, and are wanting no good.
Lamed	11	Listen dear children, take heed to my word; I'll goad you and teach you, respect for the Lord.
Mem	12	Man who is he, who delights in this life? Who loves many days, filled with goodness and right?
Nun	13	Never your tongue, should evil allow; and guard your lips, from speaking what's foul.
Samek	14	Stand not with the wicked, do good as you please; search out and pursue, until you find peace.

Ayin	15	Aimed at the just, shall His eyes fall? His ears ever listening, to answer their call.
Pe	16	Placing His face, 'gainst the evil and bad; the Lord will cut off, thoughts of them from the land.
Tsade	17	Thus O Lord, You hear our requests; plucking us all, out of every distress.
Qof	18	Quick Lord You're near, every heart that is broken; my spirit is freed, by the Word He has spoken.
Resh	19	Righteous ones daily, evil will face; but the Lord delivers, from every place.
Shin	20	Shall not He keep, his every bone; Messiah's protected, He keeps the Lord's own.
Taw	21	Their evil will slay them, the wicked repaid; they perish in guilt, for the righteous they hate.
Mem	22	Mighty the Lord, ransoms their souls; none trusting Him, will ever be low.
<i>Source: https://www.freedomlifelight.com/home/</i>		

Study: “The Book of Psalms”

- A. The Book of Psalms is the most popular Bible book.** It seems most everyone loves the Book of Psalms! For many, it is the best-known and favorite part of the Bible. Various surveys, questionnaires, and lists all rank the Psalms as the top, most-read book of Scripture, with Matthew often listed as second. Why is it so popular? It is because, despite one’s ethnicity, age, or background, the Psalms seem to touch every emotion of the heart. Most people can easily identify with the psalmists in times of joy or sadness, triumph or tragedy, peace or anger, and even when invigorated or weary. As some commentators have stated, this wonderful book provides a psalm “for every time and season.”
- B. The Book of Psalms is a timeless book.** To open the Book of Psalms is to open a window into history. For many centuries, before the time of Jesus, the Hebrews sang various psalms during times of worship and special feasts or while ascending to Jerusalem during their pilgrimages to the temple. According to Ephesians 5:19 and Acts 16:25, Christians also sang “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” in worship or times of praise. To this day, many of the psalms are still sung and recited by Christians around the world. The Book of Psalms certainly transcends history.
- C. The Book of Psalms is a divine book, but not a theological book.** It is clearly the work of divine authorship because nearly half of all messianic references in the New Testament originate in the Psalms. Yet, as Christian Yoder also said, “The Psalms are songs that come from the soul of worshipers, they are not the work of schoolmen or theologians.” (p. 157) That is an important truth! While it is certainly inspired by heaven, the Book of Psalms is not a theological treatise. God did not intend for man to base doctrine on the teachings of the Psalms. They are clearly in a different class than the Torah, for example.
- D. The Book of Psalms is a God-centered book.** Although the Book of Psalms may not be a theological book, *Theos* (the Greek word for “God”) is still found throughout the book. The Psalms teach us much about the character and nature of Yahweh and why all of creation should glorify and praise Him, such as:
1. God is holy. Holy means “set apart.” God is called the “Holy One of Israel” in Psalms 71:22, 78:41, and 89:19. This signifies that God is not one of us but is apart from and above all human life. It also means there is no trace of evil in His character, unlike what can easily be found in mankind.
 2. God is sovereign. Psalm 86:8 says, “There is no God like you among all the gods, O Lord, nor any deeds like yours.” “Who is like the Lord our God enthroned on high?” (113:5- 6). To be sovereign means God is greater than all other gods and has supreme authority over the entire universe.

3. God is omnitemporal. "Before the mountains were created, you had formed the earth and its surface, from eternity to eternity you are God" (90:2). God is an eternal being. To be omnitemporal means He exists before time, is not bound to time, and has and always will exist.
4. God is a protector. According to Psalm 18, He is described as our rock, fortress, strength, and Savior. He loves His creation, and thus, He takes care of His own.
5. God is a redeemer. Redeem means to "buy back, or regain possession of." Psalm 31 says, "Incline your ear to me and rescue me quickly." Indeed, God is in the soul redemption business, as Psalm 49:15 states, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me."
6. God is compassionate and merciful. "His mercy endures forever" is added after each verse in Psalm 136. The word "mercy" is mentioned some 100 times in Psalms (NKJV).
7. God is just. "... all his works show his faithfulness, he loves righteousness and justice" (33:4-5). He is righteousness. "God is the Judge," (75:7). His judgment is mentioned 19 times (NKJV).

E. The Book of Psalms is a book of poetry. Lastly, this may seem like an obvious point, but there is something quite different about the Psalms that must be understood. While the Psalms are, indeed, a collection of poems, songs, and various precepts of life, they are not like our Western-style poetry, which is usually composed with rhyming and meter. Hebrew poetry is considerably different. In addition, the language barrier prevents us from fully grasping the beauty of these ancient writings. Yet, despite these differences, the Psalms still provide much comfort and joy to the modern reader in a poetic style.

8. To truly understand the Psalms, appreciate their poetic qualities, and better apply them to life, some preliminary study of the book and the nature of Hebrew Poetry is necessary before examining the text.
9. With that purpose in mind, we have included two important components in this course: a Background of the Book of Psalms section and an Interpretation Guidelines section. It is recommended that students familiarize themselves with all the information in both segments before commencing a study of the Biblical text.