

Psalms

Course Notes

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THE PSALMS

INTRODUCTION

A. THE USE OF THE PSALTER

1. The Names for the Psalter

- English Psalms from Greek: *psalmos* = Hebrew *mitzmor*: song sung to string instruments
- Hebrew: *tehillim* = Praises

2. The Use of the Psalms in the New Testament

a. The Psalter is cited 126 times in the New Testament.

b. It was used by Jesus

- **Application to himself** as the Messiah
 - Ps 78:2 in Matt 13:35 about the purpose of parables
 - Ps 8:2 in Matt 21:15-16 about Jesus as the recipient of the children's praise
 - Ps 118:22-23 in Matt 21:42 about Jesus as the foundation stone of the new temple
 - Ps 110:1 in Matt 22:41-45 about the Messiah as David's Lord and in Matt 26:64 about his exaltation
 - Ps 35:19/69:4 in John 15:25 about the world's hatred of him
- **Use by Jesus in prayer** at his passion
 - Psalms 115-118 (?) after the Last Supper in Matt 26:30.
 - Ps 22:1 in Matt 27:46/Mark 15:34 in his abandonment by God
 - Ps 42:2 or 63:1 in John 19:28 in his thirst for God's presence
 - Ps 31:5 in Luke 23:46 in his self-commendation to his Father
- Use by Jesus **to preach himself** and his fulfilment of them by his death and resurrection (Luke 24:44-47).

c. The apostles used them in their preaching of Jesus (eg. Peter's use of Ps 16 in Acts 2:25-31, Ps 110:1 in Acts 2:34 and Ps 118:22 in 1 Pet 2:7).

d. The apostles identified Jesus as **the speaker** in them.

- Ps 18 in Rom 15:9

- Ps 22 in Heb 2:11
 - Ps 40 in Heb 10:5-7
- e. The writer to the Hebrews identifies Jesus with the royal singer in Ps 22:22 who led the church in its singing of thanksgiving and praise to God the Father (Heb 2:11; see also Rom 1:8; 7:25; 16:27; Col 3:16-17; Heb 13:15; 1 Pet 4:11).
- f. The early church regarded the Psalms as Christ's prayers which he prayed for us and gave to us to pray together with him.
- See D. Bonhoeffer, *The Psalms The Prayer Book of the Bible*, 20-21:
How is it possible for man and Jesus Christ to pray the Psalter together? It is the incarnate Son of God, who has borne every human weakness in his own flesh, who here pours out the heart of all humanity before God and who stands in our place and prays for us. He has known torment and pain, guilt and death more deeply than we. Therefore it is the prayer of the human nature assumed by him which comes before God. It is really our prayer, but since he knows us better than we know ourselves and since he himself was true man for our sakes, it is also really his prayer, and it can become our prayer only because it is his prayer. Who prays the Psalms? David prays... Christ prays, we pray.

3. God's Authorisation of the Psalms by the Proclamation of his Name in Exod 34:3-7

- a. This is God's answer to the requests by Moses to teach him his **way** (33:13) and to show him his **glory** (33:18)
- b. God had announced that he would parade his goodness before Moses by proclaiming his proper name, YHWH (33:19-20)
- c. Here God 'invokes' himself by name as the foundation for Israel's 'invocation' of him by that name in prayer, praise and proclamation (34:5-7)
- By preaching his **name** twice to Moses, he authorizes the Israelites to invoke him by that name.
 - By preaching his **character** to Moses in two adjectives and two adjectival phrases, he authorizes the Israelites to appeal to the LORD as 'a compassionate (רחום) and gracious (חנון) God' who is 'slow to wrath' and 'full of loving kindness/steadfast love/mercy (טוב) and faithfulness/truth (אמת)'
 - By preaching his **way of acting and dealing** with his people in three participial clauses,
 - ❖ he promises that he would continue his generosity/ loving kindness to them for a thousand generations and remove all their sins;
 - ❖ he also warns that he would not overlook their guilt but would visit their iniquity on their descendants for no more than four generations.
 - In this proclamation God authorizes the use of his name in lamentation and meditation, prayer and praise in the psalms.

- Almost every psalm has some allusion to God's self-proclamation in Ex 34:3-7 which provides the foundation for the Psalter.

4. The Inspiration of the Psalms

- a. David was inspired by God's Spirit as 'the singer of Israel's songs' in 2 Samuel 23:1-2 (see the mention of David as prophet in Acts 2:30).
- b. Since the choir leaders in temple were 'seers' (1 Chron 25:5; 2 Chron 29:30; 35:15), their performance of royal praise in sacrificial worship was 'prophecy' (1 Chron 25:1-3).
- c. The words of psalms are the voice of God's Spirit.
 - 'God spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David' (Acts 4:25).
 - 'David spoke by the Holy Spirit' (Mark 12:36).
 - 'The Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of David' (Acts 1:15).
 - 'The Holy Spirit says' (Heb 3:7).
- d. Singing of psalms was the vehicle for infilling by the Holy Spirit and the result of it (Eph 5:18-20).
- e. In the early church the psalms were held to be 'the songs of the Spirit'.
See Basil's letter 207: *Why is such preference shown the psalms?... Because hymns are human formularies, while psalms are the songs of the Spirit.*
- f. Since the psalms are inspired by God's Spirit, they are powerful performative words of God rather than just our response to God's word.
 - Powerful petition and intercession
 - Effectual proclamation by praising the Lord

5. The Traditional Use of the Psalms

- a. Liturgical Use
 - Use in Christian worship as in temple and synagogue (Acts 4:24-30; Col 3:16)
 - Use in Early Church.
See Tertullian's description of Christian worship in *On the Soul* 9.4 (c. 200 AD): 'The Scriptures are read, the psalms are sung, sermons are delivered, and petitions are offered.'
 - Use of 31 different psalms used as regular parts of the liturgy in our authorised services
 - Paraphrase and use in Christian hymnody, for as the text is to the sermon, so the psalms are to hymnody.
- b. Devotional Use

- Use in Matins and Vespers as well as in the daily office that comes from monastic communities
- Used in meditation and prayer in our tradition of daily devotions

c. Pastoral Use

- Use in pastoral rites, such as visitation of the sick
- Use to minister to people in prayer.

B. DAVID AND THE PSALMS

1. Ascription of the Psalter to David

a. Jewish Tradition

- Ascription to David: David as the 'father' of psalmody in Israel
- Composition by 10 persons: Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Heman, Jeduthun, Asaph, the sons of Korah

b. New Testament Tradition on David as the 'Speaker' in the Psalms

- Jesus
 - Ps 110 (Matt 22:43, 45)
 - The Book of Psalms (Luke 20:42)?
- Apostles
 - Ps 2 (Acts 4:25-26)
 - Ps 16 (Acts 2:25-31)
 - Ps 32 (Rom 4:6-8)
 - Ps 69 (Acts 1:16; Rom 11:9-10)
 - Ps 95 (Heb 4:7)
 - Ps 109:8 (Acts 1:16)

c. Connection of the Psalms with David in the Old Testament

- 1–2 Samuel
 - David the lyre player (1 Sam 16:14-23; 19:9)
 - David as the inspired 'singer of Israel's songs' (2 Sam 23:1; cf. 2 Sam 1:17-27; 6:5)
 - David's use of Ps 18 to celebrate his victory over his enemies (2 Sam 22:1-51)
- Chronicles and Nehemiah
 - David's institution of the temple choir for petition, thanksgiving and praise (1 Chr 6:31-32; 16:4-42; 23:5, 30-31; 25:1-31; 2 Chr 7:6; 8:14; 23:18-19; 29:25; 35:15; Neh 12:36, 45-46)
 - Hezekiah's authorization of the psalms of David and Asaph (2 Chr 29:30)
 - David's continued performance of the Lord's song by means of the temple choir even after his death in 2 Chr 7:6: 'the Levites also (stood at their posts), with the instruments for the Lord's song that David had made for giving thanks to the Lord - whose loving kindness is forever - in David's performance of praise through their hands.'
- Psalms
 - The use of the Davidic ascription: *ledavid* 73 Hebrew psalms (87 psalms in the LXX)
 - References to incidents in the life of David in their titles (Ps 3; 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142)
 - ❖ Origin of psalms?

- ❖ Use of psalms in analogous situations?
- ❖ Interpretation of psalms in life by analogy with David?
- Reference in Psalm 72:20 to Psalms 3-72 as 'the prayers of David'
 - ❖ Origin of psalms?
 - ❖ Use of psalms by David's successors
 - ❖ Authorisation of David's psalms by Hezekiah: 2 Chr 29:30

2. Modern Challenge to the Davidic Authorship of the Psalms

- Anachronistic references to the temple before its existence (Ps 5:7; 11:4; 18:6; 20:2; 23:6; 24:3; 27:4; 29:9; 36:8; 52:8; 60:6; 61:4; 63:2; 65:4; 66:13; 68:24,29,35; 69:9)
- References to David in the third person (eg. Ps 18:50)
- The increase in the number of Davidic ascriptions in the titles to the psalms from MT (73) to LXX (87)
- The supposed historical unreliability of Chronicles which tells of David's institution of psalm singing in Jerusalem
- Linguistic data as evidence for the late origin of the Psalter
- Compilation of the Psalter in the post-exilic period

3. The Sense of the Ascription of Psalms to David

a. The meaning of the preposition *le*

- By David: authorship or authorisation
- About David: content
- Belonging to David: his property
- For David: for ritual use by him or on his behalf

b. The meaning of '*David*'

- Proper name: David, son of Jesse
- Title: king in the line of David
 - Davidic monarch (eg. Hosea 3:5; Jer 30:9)
 - Messianic king (eg. Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25)

c. Possible interpretations

- Composed by David
- Dealing with David, or the Davidic king, or the Messianic king
- Performance for David and his successors as kings
- For use by David, or by the Davidic king, or by the Messianic king
- For use by the Davidic choir on behalf of the king in the royally instituted choral service at the temple in Jerusalem

C. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS

1. Since the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel, scholars have attempted to classify the psalms according to their forms or genres as determined by their ritual setting and function. The following are the genres for classification.

a. Individual Laments

- Individual laments: 6; 13; 22; 35; 39; 42–43; 77; 88; 102
- Individual petitions: 3; 4(?); 5; 7; 14 = 53(?); 17; 25; 26; 27; 28; 31; 36; 38; 40; 41(?); 51; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 61; 64; 69; 70; 71; 83; 86; 109; 130; 138(?); 139; 140; 141; 142; 143

b. Communal or National Laments

- Communal laments: 9–10; 44; 60; 74; 77; 79; 80; 85; 89 (royal); 90; 108
- Communal petitions: 12; 67; 83; 94; 123; 125; 126; 129; 137; 144

c. Psalms of trust

- Individual: 4; 11; 16; 23; 27, 62; 63; 73, 91, 121(?)
- Communal: 115, 123, 124, 125, 126

d. Thanksgiving

- Individual thanksgiving: 9(?); 18 (royal); 30; 31 (?); 32(?); 34(?); 40:1-10; 41; 92; 116; 118; 120; 138(?); Isa 38:10-20; Jonah 3:1-9
- Communal thanksgiving: 65(?); 66(?); 100(?); 107(?); 118; 124; 129

e. Hymns of Praise

- General: 8; 19; 29; 33; 65; 66; 67(?); 68; 96; 98; 100; 103; 104; 105; 111(?); 112(?); 113; 114(?); 117; 135; 136; 145–150 (Note the Egyptian Hallel in 113–118 and the Little Hallel in 146–150)
- Enthronement of God as King: 47; 93; 96, 97, 98, 99
- Hymns of Zion: 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122

2. A number of other psalms are categorised according to their origin and use.

a. Royal Psalms

- Coronation: 2; 101; 110
- Wedding: 45
- Prayer for the king: 20; 21; 72; 132
- Praise and lament for the monarchy: 89
- King's confession of faith: 63 (?)
- Prayer by the king: 144
- Thanksgiving by the king: 18; 138(?)

See also the mention of the king in Ps 28:8; 61:5-6; 78:70-72; 84:9.

b. Prophetic Psalms

- Divine instruction on theophany in worship: 50; 81
- Psalms with divine oracles: 12:5; 14:4; 68:12-13,22-23; 75:2-5; 82:2-7; 89:19-37; 91:14-16; 110:1,4; 132:11-18

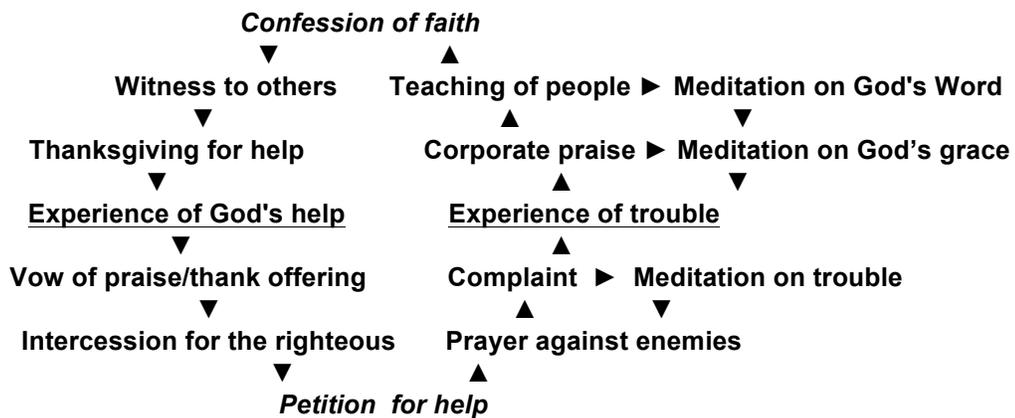
c. Priestly Liturgical Psalms

- Entrance liturgies: 15; 24
- Blessing: 91; 121; 128; 133; 134
- Processional: 68; 95; 100

d. Wisdom Psalms

- Torah: 1; 19; 119 (acrostic)
- Riddles: 49; 73; 78
- Proverbial psalms: 34 (acrostic); 127
- *Ashre* psalms: 1 (righteous person); 32 (forgiven person); 41 (charitable person); 112 (God-fearer); 128 (God-fearer)
- Acrostic psalms: 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145(?)

2. While this system of classification makes good sense of many psalms, some do not conform to the pattern but contain unexpected mixtures of forms. Hence thanksgiving precedes petition and complaint in 9-10, 40 and 138. After demonstrating that thanksgiving could not be distinguished from praise, Westermann (1980) proposed that these psalms be classified either as narrative praise (God's acts) or descriptive praise (God's nature). He moreover believed that a polarity between lament and praise arose from the basic category of lament. Goldingay (1981) has refined this by proposing that the various psalms are part of a dynamic cycle of praise and prayer. I have taken up his suggestions and envisage it as follows:



D. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PSALTER

1. Arrangement in Five Books

Just as there are five books of the law and of prophecy, so there are five books of the Psalter as indicated by the eulogies: 'Blessed be the Lord...' in 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48.

- Book 1: 1–41
- Book 2: 42–72 (Prayers of David 3–72; cf. 72:20)
- Book 3: 73–89
- Book 4: 90–106 (with Hallelujah after the first Hallelujah in 104:35)
- Book 5: 107–150: 150 instead of a call to bless the Lord

2. Collections of Psalms in the Psalter

- Untitled Introductory Psalms: 1–2
- Yahwist Psalter: 3–41
 - **Psalms of David:** 3–32
 - Untitled Hymn of Praise: 33
 - **Psalms of David:** 34–41
- Elohist Psalter: 42–83
- Prayer of Moses: 90
- Untitled Psalm: 91
- Psalms of Praise: 92–100 (Enthronement Psalms: 93–99)
- **Psalm of David:** 101
- Prayer of Afflicted Person: 102
- **Psalm of David:** 103
- Untitled Hallelujah Psalms: 104–106
- Untitled Thanksgiving: 107
- **Psalms of David:** 108–110
- Untitled Hallelujah Psalms: 111–118 (Egyptian Hallel: 113–118)
- Great Hallel: 119–136
 - Untitled Torah Psalm: 119
 - Fifteen Songs of Ascent: 120–134 (15 sanctuary steps)
 - Untitled Hallelujah Psalm: 135
 - Untitled thanksgiving: 136
- Untitled lament from Exile in Babylon: 137
- **Psalms of David:** 138–145
- Untitled Hallelujah Psalms: 146–150

3. The Theological Shape of the Psalter

- a. Five books as counterpart to Pentateuch: meditation on the Torah.
- b. Psalter as handbook for meditation and prayer as in Psalms 1–2
- Psalter as spoken 'meditation' (*hagah*) on the Torah (Ps 1:2)
 - Meditation as complaining to God in trouble (Ps 5:1; 39:3; 90:9)
 - Meditation as praising the Lord (Ps 19:14; 35:28; 63:6; 71:24; 77:12; 143:5)
 - Meditation as instruction in wisdom (Ps 37:30; 49:3)
 - Taking refuge by petitioning the Lord and his Messiah (Ps 2:11)
- c. Psalter as handbook for praise: see Hebrew title
- Transition: laments in books 1–3 ► praises in books 4–5
 - National thanksgiving in 105; 106; 107; 118; 136
 - Hallelujah psalms as goal of Psalter
 - Psalms 90–103 ► 104–106
 - Psalms 107–110 ► 111–118
 - Psalms 119–134 ► 135
 - Psalms 136–145 ► 146–150
- d. Psalter as a handbook for divine wisdom (cf. Ps 51:6; 90:12; 111:10)
- Psalm 1 on meditation as introduction to Psalter
 - Psalm 73 on prosperity of the wicked as introduction to book 3
 - Psalm 90 on death as God's judgment as introduction to book 4
 - Psalm 107 on thanksgiving for God's deliverance of the righteous as introduction to book 5
 - Psalm 111 on fearing the Lord by praising him as introduction to Hallelujah psalms 111–118
 - Acrostic Psalm 145 on God's gracious rule as introduction to Hallelujah psalms 146–150
- e. Psalter as a handbook for hope in the coming Messiah
- Psalm 2 on the Messiah as God's Son as the introduction to the prayers of David in 3–72 which are made in answer to God's command in 2:8
 - Psalm 72 with its intercession for the Messianic king and his universal rule as the culmination of the prayers in 3–71
 - Psalm 89 with its lament for the loss of the Messianic king as the culmination of all the laments in 3–88, so that 90–91 and 92–150 are the answer to the apparent failure of the Lord's covenant with David
 - Psalm 110 with its celebration of the Messiah's enthronement with God as the introduction to the hymns of praise in 111–118
 - Psalm 144 with its royal petition and praise for victory as the introduction to the final outburst of praise in 145–150

TWO INTRODUCTORY PSALMS

PSALM 1

1. Genre: Wisdom Poem

- a. Forms of speech from wisdom tradition.
 - *Ashrē* saying: 1-2 (cf. Pr 29:18^b)
 - Antithetical proverbial sayings: 5,6 (see Pr 3:33).
 - Parabolic sayings: 3,4.
- b. Wisdom language
 - Scoffers
 - Law/instruction/teaching
 - Counsel
 - The way
 - The contrast between the righteous and the wicked

2. Literary Features

- Key words
 - *Wicked* in 1,4,5,6
 - *Way* in 1,6
 - *Sinners* in 1,5
 - *The righteous* in 5,6.
- Repetition of the prefix *be* seven times
- Inclusion (bracketing): *the way* and *the wicked* in 1 and 6
- Contrasts
 - The advice of the wicked v the teaching of the Lord.
 - The way of sinners/wicked v the way of the righteous.
 - Sitting in the seat of scoffers v rising in the congregation of the righteous.
 - Chaff v the fruitful tree.
 - Destruction v prosperity.
- Changes of subject in the psalm.
 - The person who meditates on the Lord's teaching (1-3^b)
 - His work (3^c)
 - Wicked people (4-5)
 - The Lord (6^a)
 - The way of the wicked (6^b)
- Chiasms (inversions)
 - Verses 5 and 6, i.e. wicked and righteous v. righteous and wicked
 - Verses 1-3 v. 4-6
 - ❖ 1 = 5-6

- ❖ 2-3b =4
- ❖ 3c as the pivot of the poem
- Imagery
 - The wicked
 - Traveller on the road to nowhere
 - Teacher by ridicule
 - Wind-blown chaff
 - Condemned criminal in a court of law
 - Excommunicated person
- The righteous
 - Irrigated, fruitful, evergreen fruit tree
 - Traveller with God
- Life
 - School
 - Journey
- God
 - Teacher
 - Fruit-grower
 - Farmer
 - Judge
 - Guide for blind person on an unseen journey

3. Outline of Structure

- Happiness of those who meditate on the Lord's instruction (1-3).
 - Avoidance of evil advice and concentration on the Lord's teaching (1-2)
 - Similarity to a fruitful tree by an irrigation canal (3^{a-b})
 - Success in work (3^c)
- The way of wicked people (4-5)
 - Their failure (4^a)
 - Their similarity to chaff (4^b)
 - Their exclusion from God's congregation (5)
- The conclusion (6)
 - The way of the righteous as an unseen journey with God (6^a)
 - The way of the wicked as a road that leads nowhere (6^b)

4. Exegesis

The psalm as a meditation on the proverb in verse 6

a. What makes a person lucky in life?: 1-2

(1) Negative characteristics (1).

(a) Note the three step parallelism with the climax on the last step.

- Walking → standing → sitting
- Wicked → sinners → mockers

- Advice (on journey) → way → seat (destination of journey)
- (b) The happy person avoids association with the wicked who are condemned by God.
- Their words: following their advice
 - Their actions: copying their behaviour
 - Their thinking: joining them in their ridicule of righteousness
- (2) Positive characteristics: two-sided concentration on the Lord's teaching where the first leads to the second (2)
- Affective attachment and reception: delight in and enjoyment of the Lord's instruction (heart)
 - Active meditation: constant speaking and verbal repetition of God's word (mouth)
 - Meditation on the torah is therefore the main mark of a successful person
- b. The result of meditation on the torah: 3
- (1) Fruitfulness
- Imagery of tree which combines two traditions of use
 - Fruit tree by canal in the desert (see Jer 17:5-8)
 - Mythological tree of life in an earthly and heavenly temple (see Ps 52:8-10; 92:12-15)
 - Three points of comparison
 - Location: planted by God in his lifegiving presence
 - Nourishment: irrigated by God through his word
 - Growth: seasonal fruitfulness and evergreen foliage for shelter and healing (see Ezek 47:12)
- (2) Success
- Success in work
 - Successful worker: source of life and blessing in community
- c. The characteristics of godless people: 4-5
- (1) Their way of life is the opposite of those who follow the Lord's instruction
- Their work does not prosper.
 - They don't delight in and meditate on the Lord's instruction.
 - They associate with their own kind of people.
 - And so they are not successful people.
- (2) Their character and fate is revealed by the outcome of their lives.
- They are like chaff without life, substance and stability.

- They are scattered by the wind of God's judgment which reveals their true character and its ultimate consequences.
 - They will not be able to triumph in the court of law against the righteous (Ps 27:12; 35:11).
 - They will not survive the Lord's judgment (Ps 36:12; Amos 7:2, 5; see Ps 130:3; 20:8).
 - They will be excluded from the liturgical community, the counterpart to the 'council of the wicked', the place where the Lord justifies and blesses the righteous (see Ps 24:3-5).
- d. The difference between the righteous and the wicked: 6
- (1) Note the reversal of customary modes of expression involved in the Lord knowing the way of the righteous and in the destruction of the way of the wicked.
 - (2) The righteous do not know their own way
 - Like blind people or people walking in darkness, they do not see where they are going or that the Lord is travelling with them in the journey through life.
 - Their righteousness, fruitfulness and success is hidden from them.
 - They depend on the voice of God and his constant instruction of them for their direction in life, for he alone knows their way.
 - (3) How does the Lord 'know' the way of the righteous?
 - He has ordained this unseen way for them to walk with him.
 - He travels with them and leads them on this way as their unseen companion and guide.
 - He recognises them and approves and the way they travel.
 - He reveals their righteousness and their success.
 - He leads them on the way of growing intimacy with him through their meditation on his word.
 - (3) The way of the wicked perishes.
 - It is a road that is based on illusion and the delusion of life apart from God and his law/instruction.
 - This road leads nowhere except to destruction, since it disappears and leaves the traveller lost without any options for further travel except to abandon it for the way of the righteous.
 - It leads to failure, frustration and disintegration.

5. Theological and Liturgical Use

- Use in the lectionary
 - Year A: Proper 25 with Lev 19:1,2,15-18

- Year B: 7 Easter with Acts 1:15-17,21-26; Proper 20 with Prov 31:1-31
- Year C: 6 Epiphany with Jer 17:5-10; Proper 18 with Deut 30:15-20
- Teaching on meditation and our hidden righteousness (see Luther in LW 14, 287-311)
- Preaching on the life giving power of God's word

PSALM 2

1. Text Criticism

- a. In 2:6 the LXX changes the text to make the king the speaker: “I have been installed as his king on Zion his holy hill.”
- b. In 2:9 the translators of the LXX read *tir'ēm* rather than *terō'ēm* and so translated it as “you will shepherd them” (see Rev 2:27; 19:15).
- c. Since 11^b-12^a is rather disjointed and hard to interpret, the translators of the RSV and NRSV read *leraglāw bir'ādāh nashgū* (with trembling kiss his feet) and propose that *bār* (son) has come into the text by dittography (repetition) from *bir'ādāh*.

2. Genre

- Genre: royal psalm with ultimatum to the nations on the king's accession to his throne
- Setting: the king's coronation or enthronement
- Forms of speech
 - Complaint to God from a lament (1-3) with a divine oracle (4-6)
 - Presentation by a king of his divine commission to his courtiers (7-9)
 - Adoption formula (7^b)
 - Offer by king to governor of choice of territory to administer (8)
 - Promise of victory and supremacy (9)
 - Ultimatum to the nations: wisdom genre of instruction (10-12^b)
 - Ashre saying: congratulation (12^c)

3. Literary Features

- Reports of direct speech
 - From the kings about God (3)
 - From God about his king (6)
 - From God to the king (7^b-9)
- Change of speakers
 - Court official or, most likely, a royal prophet (1-6)
 - King (7-9)
 - Court official or royal prophet (10-12)
- Key words
 - King: 1,6,10
 - Earth: 1,8,10
 - Nations:1,8)

➤ Wrath: 5,12

4. Outline of Structure

- a. Report of the Lord's reaction to the rebellion of the nations: 1-6
 - Complaint about the rebellion of the kings against the Lord (1-3)
 - Their conspiracy against (1-2)
 - Their decision to reject his rule (3)
 - The Lord's response to the complaint (4-6)
 - His disdain of them and wrath against them (4-5)
 - Oracle about his installation of his king on Zion (6)
- b. The Lord's mandate to the Davidic king: 7-9
 - The king's announcement of the Lord's decree (7^a)
 - The Lord's commission to the king (7^b-9)
 - God's adoption of him as his son (7^b)
 - God's offer to him of international rule (8-9)
- a. Ultimatum to the nations: 10-12^a
 - Call for attention to instruction (10)
 - Summons to serve the Lord and submit to his son (11-12^a)
- b. Congratulation of those who take refuge in the king (12^b)

5. Exegesis

See O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 247-268, for the connection between the understanding of kingship in Israel and elsewhere in the ancient world.

- a. Complaint about the conspiracy of the nations and their kings: 1-3
 - Probable speaker: royal prophet at king's coronation
 - Attitude of the nations: expressed in unrest and muttering ("meditation") of empty threats
 - Their action: organised opposition and common alliance against the Lord and his anointed king (*messiah*)
 - Their decision: rebellion against them
- b. Divine response to the complaint: 4-6
 - God's attitude: expressed in laughter and mockery (see Ps 37:13; 59:9)
 - God's action: wrath at sacrilegious plan and verbal intimidation
 - God's decree: anointed king installed by him on his holy mountain and protected by the sanctuary and God's holiness (see Ps 3:4; 15:1; 43:3; 99:9 and O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, for the symbolism of the Lord's mountain)
- c. Proclamation by the king of his divine mandate: 7-9

See O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 259-61, for Pharaoh's presentation to his officials of his divinely bestowed titles which indicate his mandate and commission

- Gift of sonship (7b): see 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6 for the king as God's son and Ps 89:26-27 for the king as God's first-born son.
 - Adoption as son – transferal of authority
 - Begetting of legal heir – right to inheritance (see Ps 110:3)
- Offer of world empire on request (8)
 - Nations in addition to Israel as hereditary subjects
 - Whole world as God's imperial estate

d. Promise of dominion and victory (9)

See O Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 265-68, for the ritual smashing of pottery by Egyptian kings.

- Shepherding with iron sceptre as symbol of divinely bestowed power to rule by defending his people against the powers of chaos
- Smashing pots as symbol of victory over enemies

e. Ultimatum to the rulers of the nations: 10–12^a

- Call to heed prudent instruction
- Instruction: three commands with a warning
 - Serve Yahweh by offering reverent sacrificial worship (see Ps 100:1; Exod 3:12; 2 Kgs 21:3).
 - Rejoice in him with trembling: jubilation with trepidation, astonishment, amazement, and excitement.
 - ❖ *Gil* as the physical manifestation of jubilation that is felt in the heart (Ps 13:6; 16:9) and expressed physically (Ps 51:8), but not necessarily heard audibly, since the earth (Ps 96:11; 97:1; Isa 49:13; Joel 2:21) and the mountains (Ps 65:13) can do so too
 - ❖ Association with singing (Ps 13:6; 149:1-2), music (Ps 149:2-3), and praise (Ps 9:14; 149:1-2)
 - ❖ Connection with processions (Ps 89:15-16), singing and dancing to musical accompaniment (Ps 149:1-3), and the performance of thanks and praise (Ps 9:14; 13:5; 43:4) at the temple in Jerusalem
 - ❖ Call to “be glad” in the imperative hymns of praise sung during the presentation of the daily burnt offering (1 Chron 16:7-41; see also Ps 32:11; 96:11; 97:1; 149:2; Isa 49:13; Joel 2:21, 23; Zech 9:9)
 - Kiss the royal son as mark of acceptance as king
 - ❖ Kissing the face as a sign of brotherhood and peace (Gen 33:4; 45:15; 1 Sam 20:41; 2 Sam 14:33; 15:5)
 - ❖ Kissing the feet as a sign of total submission and petition for mercy (Isa 49:23; see Ps 18:44-45; 72:9; 1 Kgs 19:18)

- Warning: avoidance of the king's wrath and destruction
 - ❖ King as agent of divine grace and wrath
 - ❖ Destiny of kings determined by their attitude to the Messiah
- Concluding congratulation: 12^b (cf. Ps 34:8)
 - Who takes refuge?
 - ❖ Israelites
 - ❖ Kings of nations
 - In whom do they take refuge?
 - ❖ The Lord: usual idiom
 - ❖ His Messiah: only here
 - ❖ The Lord through his Messiah
 - From what?
 - ❖ Enemies (see Ps 7:1; 17:7; 25:20)
 - ❖ Day of trouble (see Ps 37:39)
 - How?
 - ❖ Pilgrimage to temple (see Ps 5:7,11; 11:1,4; 31:19-20; 61:4)
 - ❖ Presentation of sacrifices (see Ps 34:8; 36:7-8; Deut 32:37-38)
 - ❖ Petition in laments (see Ps 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1)

6. Theological and Liturgical Use

a. Application to Jesus in the New Testament

- Quotation for the coronation of Jesus at his resurrection: Acts 4:25-26; 13:32-33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Rev 2:26-27; 19:11-16. See also Matt 28:18; Mark 1:11; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 2:8; Rev 1:5; 6:15-17; 11:18; 12:5.
- Jesus as God's royal son and heir (Heb 1:5; 5:5)
- Enthronement of Jesus as Messiah by his resurrection and ascension (Acts 4:24-30; 13:33)
 - Christ's victorious rule over the nations shared with church (Rev 2:26-27)
 - Shepherding and defeat of nations with his word (Rev 19:15)

b. Use in the Three Year Lectionary

- Transfiguration Series A with Matt 17:1-9

7. Psalms 1 and 2 as an Introduction to the Book of Psalms

- Their connection
 - Lack of titles before collection of the prayers of David in 3-72
 - One psalm in Acts 13:33 (variant reading)
 - Verbal links: *blessed, meditate, mock, wicked, the way*
- Their instruction on the purpose of the Psalter
 - To teach that true happiness is found in the Lord and his teaching

- To help the righteous to meditate on the Lord's instruction with psalms of lament and psalms of praise
- To call the nations to worship the Lord and to submit to his messianic King
- To encourage all people to take refuge in the Lord and his Messiah by complaining to them and petitioning them
- To warn each person and all the nations of the Lord's judgment on those who refuse to heed his instruction and rebel against him.

Individual Laments

1. These psalms normally contain at least four kinds of utterances
 - The invocation of God by his holy name
 - A description of the psalmist's trouble or a complaint against God for his negative disposition to the psalmist
 - A plea for help
 - A vow of praise or act of praise

2. The following elements occur in these psalms
 - Invocation of God by his holy name
 - Complaint to God about trouble
 - Description of trouble
 - Description of enemies and hurt from them
 - Complaint against God for indifference or wrath, inactivity or rejection
 - Confession of faith
 - Confidence in God's grace and his gracious disposition
 - Confidence in help from him
 - Confession of innocence or guilt
 - Prayer to God in trouble
 - Prayer against enemies (often called an imprecation)
 - ❖ Surrender of the injury to God
 - ❖ Recognition of God as the just avenger
 - Intercession for God's people
 - Pleas for intervention and help for the psalmist
 - Praise of God
 - Promise of thank offering or praise
 - Praise for anticipated help

3. The individual laments can be divided into two classes as established by C. C. Broyles in *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*.
 - a. Individual complaints which first formally lodge a complaint with God on his failure to keep his promises and then formally appeal for his grace and help, ie they appeal to God's grace in the face of his wrath.
 - b. Individual petitions in which the suppliant first describes his trouble and then appeals to God to rectify it, ie they appeal for help in the face of trouble.

4. Since the Lord has authorised his people to appeal formally to him at the temple and to present their petitions to him there, the laments are sanctioned by him.
 - a. In Exodus 34:5-7 he authorised such appeals by giving them his name: **Yahweh** and revealing his gracious disposition towards them.

- On the basis of Exod 22:22-24 afflicted people could appeal to him for justice and deliverance from their enemies.
 - On the basis of Exod 22:25-27 poor people without an assured livelihood and means of support could appeal to him for charity and help in their need.
 - On the basis of Exod 34:6-7 people in trouble could appeal for help and sinners could appeal to him for mercy and pardon.
- b. The Lord's acceptance of Solomon's intercession in 1 Kgs 8:28-53, 59f (cf. 2 Chr 6:19-40 and 7:12-16) authorises the Israelites to bring their petitions to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem.
5. The purpose of these laments is to appeal to the Lord for help like subjects of a king to their king.
- a. They do so in a way that is acceptable to him and so sure to obtain a favourable response.
 - b. They therefore use conventional language and are often general and formulaic.

Psalm 13

1. Text and Translation

- a. While most translate *la'ani* in 13:6^a as 'But I ...' and so connect it with the vow of praise, the change of person and tense after it seems to connect it with 4-5 as the reason for the request and so may be translated as 'even though I have trusted'.
- b. The *ki* in v.6^d could be construed in three ways.
 - *Because*: the cause of the song
 - *When*: the condition for the song
 - *Truly*: the content of the song

2. Genre

- Individual complaint
- Situation: sickness, persecution, war (?)

3. Literary Features

- The repetition of *'ad-'ānāh* in v.2-3
- The repetition of *gīl* in two different senses in v.5 and v.6
- The contrast between *yāgōn bilebābi* in v.3 and *yāgēl libbi* in v.6.

4. Structure

- Superscription: 1
- Invocation with fourfold complaint to God: 2-3
 - For forgetting the psalmist
 - For disfavour to him
 - For unbearable suffering
 - For ascendancy of his enemies over him
- Three part plea to God: 4-6^a
 - Three petitions (4^{a-c})
 - ❖ For acceptance
 - ❖ For favourable response
 - ❖ For revitalisation
 - Three reasons for answering petitions (4^d-6^a)
 - ❖ Prevention of psalmist's death
 - ❖ Prevention of the triumph of his enemy
 - ❖ Prevention of rejoicing by his foes at his downfall despite his trust in the Lord's loving kindness
- Praise: 6^{b-d}
 - Vow of rejoicing with a song of thanksgiving
 - Reason, time and content of this song

5. Exegesis

- a. The superscription: 13:1
 - *lamenatztzē'ach*: for the choirmaster, music director (1 Chron 15:19-21)
 - *mizmōr*: song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument such as a lyre
 - *ledāwīd*: belonging to the Davidic psalter with David as the royal leader and patron of petition and praise

- b. The invocation and complaint: 13:2-3
 - Invocation of holy name: appeal for gracious presence and help (see Exod 34:6-7).
 - Situation of the psalmist
 - Long period of constant intolerable pain
 - Threat of death
 - Caught between God's apparent disfavour and the ascendancy of his enemy
 - The psalmist as the victim of 'his enemy' and 'his foes'
 - Deliberate anonymity to fit all contexts
 - Identification of 'the enemy' with the devil in the NT (Matt 13:25, 28, 39; Luke 10:19)
 - Identity of the anonymous enemy and opponents (13:3,5)
 - Personal/psychological enemies?
 - Political: internal or foreign enemies?
 - Social or class enemies?
 - Legal opponents?
 - Unbelievers?
 - Sorcerers and magicians?
 - Death and the powers of Sheol?
 - Demonic enemies?
 - The content of the complaint
 - God's inactivity
 - ❖ See the complaints about God forgetting his people in Ps 10:12; 42:10; 44:24; 74:19.
 - ❖ Forgetting is the opposite of remembering to keep a commitment (eg. God's remembrance of Noah in Gen 8:1).
 - ❖ The verb does not refer to God's lapse of memory but his apparent indifference to his people.
 - ❖ God's forgets his people by failing to respond to their cry for help (Ps 9:12,19) and forgetting to be merciful to them (Ps 77:10).
 - The Lord's disfavour
 - ❖ See Ps 10:11; 22:24; 27:9; 30:7; 44:24; 88:14; 104:29; 143:7.

- ❖ God's face is his gracious presence which shines like the sun upon the righteous (Ps 4:6; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135).
 - ❖ When God hides his face from someone who has sinned, he no longer gives access to his gracious presence and does not respond favourably to that person. They do not know where they stand with him but are under his wrath (Ps 27:7-9; 30:7).
 - ❖ Ultimately God's hiding of his face results in death (Ps 104:29).
 - His own pain and heartache which comes from brooding over his trouble.
 - The ascendancy or promotion or triumph of his enemy over him is both the cause or the result of his suffering and alienation from God.
- c. Petitions for help: 13:4^{a-c}
- *Habbitāh*: plea for consideration and acceptance (Ps 84:10; Lam 4:16; cf. use for acceptance of sacrifices in Amos 5:22)
 - *'anēni*: plea for favourable word from the Lord as his God (Ps 4:1; 27:7; 55:2; 60:5; 69:13, 16, 17; 86:1; 102:2; 108:6; 119:145; 143:17)
 - *hā'irāh*: plea for revitalization and restoration to full health (see Ezra 9:8; Ps 19:8; Prov 29:13).
 - Reversal of normal plea for God to let his face shine on his people (Num 6:25; Ps 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135; Dan 9:17).
 - Bright eyes are a sign of physical and mental vitality (Deut 34:7; 1 Sam 14:27,29), while dim eyes are associated with a loss of vitality and imminent death (Ps 6:8; 38:11; Lam 5:17).
- d. Reasons for the petitions: 13:4^d-5^a
- His death if God fails to act (4^d)
 - Prevention of the triumph his enemy over him and God (5^a)
 - Boasting of defeat of him and God
 - Contrast with the song of praise in 13:7
 - Prevention of rejoicing by his foes at the shaking of his trust in God's loving kindness (5^b-6^a)
 - Downfall from a state of stability into a chaotic state (note the use of *bal-yimot* in Ps 10:6; 15:5; 16:8; 21:7; 30:6; 62:2,6; 112:6, and the use the verb *mot* with reference to cosmic order and stability in Ps 46:5; 82:5; 93:1; 96:10; 104:5; 125:1).
 - Purpose of attack: destruction of his trust the God's "loving kindness"
- e. Vow of praise: 6^b-7. See Ps 57:7; 59:17; 144:9 for other vows of song.
- Note the change from the sorrowful heart in 3 to the rejoicing heart.

- If the Lord delivers the psalmist from death, he promises to present a thank offering with a song of thanksgiving for his deliverance (Ps 27:6; Ps 107:1-32; 116:12-19; see Job 33:23-28).
- The cause and content of his song would be the Lord's act of generosity to him.
- Note the use of the verb *gamal* in Ps 7:4; 18:20; 103:1; 116:7; 119:17; 137:8; 142:7.
 - This verb for an act of great generosity is derived from the system of payback in a tribal society and described the bestowal of a generous gift with the consequent obligation to respond appropriately to the benefactor by increasing his prestige in that social group. It can therefore be used in the sense of reward or recompense.
 - Like the client of a benefactor who repaid him with his allegiance, work, and praise, the psalmist promises to sing the praises of his God.

6. Liturgical Use

- Use with the story of the “sacrifice” of Isaac in Gen 22:1-14 in Proper 8, Series A

PSALM 57

1. Text and Translation

- a. Since *havvōth* in 2 is the subject of a singular verb *ya'abōr*, it may be construed either as a plural of abstraction or an archaic fs form.
- b. The object of *yishlach* in 4a is *chasdō we'amtō*. It can be construed either as an imperfect or a jussive. If it is construed as a jussive, then *chērēph shō'aphi* is the protasis of an implied conditional sentence: “if the person who hounds me rebukes (me), may God send his mercy and faithfulness”. If it is construed as in imperfect, then the verb *chērēph* stands in apposition to *yishlach*, with God as its subject, and is used in the military sense of “provoking” or “challenging” an opponent to single combat (cf 1 Sam 17:25,36,45): “he will send from heaven, and save me; he challenges whoever hounds me”.
- c. In 5 *naphshi* is used vocatively as the subject of *'eshkebāh*, “o my soul”.
- d. While *lāhat* can mean to “burn”, it is best taken in 5 to mean “gulp” or “eat”. *Benē 'ādām* is then its object.
- e. In 6 *kebōdekā* is best taken as the indirect object of *rūmāh*, ie “rise with your glory”.
- f. *Kebōdi* in v 9 is the vocative subject of the repeated *'ūrāh* (Ps 7:6; 16:9; 30:12; 108:1). My glory can refer to one of three things.
 - God as the source of glory and the object of praise (Ps 3:3)
 - The heart as glorified by God and his presence (Ps 7:6; 16:9; 30:12)
 - God's reputation and honour as the cause of praise (Ps 62:7; 84:11)
- g. *Hennebel wekinnōr*: harp and lyre is the indirect object of *hā'irāh* in v 9 ie “I must awaken the dawn with the harp and the lyre”.
- h. The 2ms suffixes on *'ōdekā* and *'azammerkā* in v 10 indicate that the song is sung about God rather than to him.
- i. In 11 *gādōl* governs both parts of the verse. The Israelites magnified God, made him great (*giddēl*) by saying, “The Lord is great” (Ps 48:1; 96:4; 99:2; 135:5; 145:3; 147:5), or “The lovingkindness of the Lord is great” (Ps 86: 13; cf. 145:8), or “the glory of the Lord is great” (Ps 138:5), or “you are great” (Ps 77:13; 86:10; 95:3)

2. Genre

- Individual lament: petition rather than complaint

- Speaker: three possibilities
 - King: see theophany in 6 and nations in 10
 - Accused person who appeals to the Lord for justice (see 1 Kgs 8:31-32; cf Ps 7; 11; 17; 26) (?)
 - Singer (7-8)
- Morning psalm

3. Literary Features

- The use of the refrain in 6 and 12
- The repetition of key words
 - *Soul* in 2, 5 and 7
 - *Glory* in 6, 9 and 12
 - *Lovingkindness* in 4 and 11
 - *Truth/faithfulness* in 4 and 11
 - *Make music* in 8 and 10
- The use of double duty pivot words which can be construed either with what precedes and with what follows them
 - *God* in 2a and 8a
 - *My glory* in 9a
 - *My Lord* in 10
- The use of a double duty word for both halves of a verse (anacrusis)
 - *Rūmāh* in 6 and 12
 - *Gādōl* in 11

4. Structure

- Superscription: 57:1
- Plea for mercy: 57:2-6
 - Petition to God for mercy (2)
 - Wish for or assurance of divine intervention (3-4)
 - Report on the threat from “man eaters” (5)
 - Petition to God for his theophany (6)
- Promise of thanksgiving: 57:7-12
 - Report of the action and fate of the “man eaters” (7)
 - Decision to awaken dawn with a song (8-9)
 - Vow to praise God to an international audience (10-11)
 - Petition for divine theophany (12)

5. Exegesis

a. Superscription: 57:1

- A *miktām* was probably a psalm which was inscribed and placed somewhere in the sanctuary as a substitute for a person in offering his prayer to God (cf. Ps. 16:1; 56:1; 58:1; 59:1; 60:1). Hence the words: *‘al tashchēth* “Do not destroy”, as in Ps 57:1; 58:1; 59:1; 75:1 (cf. Keel, 328-330).
- The psalm belongs to the Davidic psalter.

- Mention of cave in title from 1 Sam 24:1-22
- Use in any life-threatening situation where the psalm could be used to petition God for mercy

b. Plea for mercy: 57:2-6

- Petition: addressed to God (2)
 - In the face of certain “destruction” by enemies who “hound” him (4), the psalmist places his life under God's protection by invoking his name.
 - He takes refuge in God and the wings of his cherubim, like a chick escaping from trouble under the wings of a hen (see Ps 17:8; 36:7; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; cf Keel, 190-192).
 - Like a needy subject with his king, he appeals to God for his grace and favour (cf. Ps 4:1; 6:2; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 41:4,10; 51:1; 86:3,16).
- Assurance of God’s intervention: addressed to humanity (3-4)
 - The psalmist invokes God by the title *‘elyōn* which was originally used as a name of El the supreme head of the Canaanite pantheon (cf Gen 14:18-20) and then taken over as a title for Yahweh.
 - God is the “avenger” of those who invoke him for justice.
 - He will therefore commission two powerful warriors from his body guards: *Loving-kindness* and *Truth* to rescue the psalmist by challenging his enemies to battle (cf. Ps 42:3; 89:14).
- Evaluation of threat: addressed to himself (5).
 - The psalmist imagines that for him to trust in God is like a person lying down to sleep among man-eating lions (see Ps 57:2; 10:9-10; 17:12; 22:13,16,12; 35:17; 58:16; 91:13; cf. Keel, 85-86).
 - Like demonic lions, his enemies threaten to devour him.
 - Like lions, they use their teeth and tongues as weapons against him (see Ps 52:2-4; 59:7; 64:2-4).
- Petition for God’s theophany: addressed to God (6)
 - The psalmist does not just appeal for God's intervention for him but for all people.
 - He appeals for the theophany of God as king in his glory which would result in the judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous (see Ps 97; cf. Ps 72:19; 148:13).
 - In this plea God is compared with the sun and his glory is envisaged as the light of the sun which covers heaven and earth (cf. Ps 113:2-4).
 - Just as God's glory filled his heavenly temple (Ps 113:4) and earthly temple (Exod 40:34f; 1 Kgs 8:11), so it would one day fill the whole world set free from all wickedness, evil and impurity (Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Isa 6:3; 40:5; Hab 2:14).

➤ **God's glory : heavenly temple ► earthly temple ► whole world**

c. Promise of thanksgiving: 57:7-12

- Reflection on the downfall of the enemies: addressed to a human audience (7)
 - After the petition, the complaint about the enemies of 5 turns into the proclamation of their judgment in 7.
 - God destroys them through their own evil-doing, like hunters caught in their own traps (see Ps 7:15-16; 9:15; 35:7-8; 141:4-10; cf. Keel, 89-95). Evil therefore destroys itself.
 - ❖ Pit = animals
 - ❖ Net = birds
 - Their downfall anticipates God's universal judgment and rule.
- Performance of song to awaken dawn: addressed to himself (8-9).
 - Note the reversal of the normal order. The dawn does not waken the psalmist; the psalmist wakens the dawn.
 - Because of his realisation about the downfall of his enemies, the psalmist ushers in the new day with praise.
 - By singing his song of praise the psalmist “wakes up” three things
 - ❖ His heart which is glorified as he glorifies the Lord.
 - ❖ His harp and lyre to glorify the Lord.
 - ❖ The dawn of God's glory for all the nations like the sun that covers the earth with its light.

Sun in the sky	God's light	God's glory
▼overcomes	▼overcomes	▼overcomes
Night on earth	Darkness	Demonic “lions”

- Dawn is to be understood in four ways
 - ❖ Liturgically as the beginning of a new day
 - ❖ Musically as the morning song played on the harp and lyre
 - ❖ Devotionally as the reflection of God's glory in the heart of the singer
 - ❖ Eschatologically as God's theophany and final victory over darkness

Singer	Musician	Psalmist	King with army against enemies
↓ sings	↓ plays	↓ sings	↓ sings
Morning song	Music	Praise of God	Battle song
↓ awakens	↓ awakens	↓ awakens	↓ awakens

Dawn	Harp/lyre	Heart: temple	God's theophany in the whole world
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- The psalmist calls on his own “glory” to “wake up”, overcome the powers of darkness, and announce the new day (see the use of *‘ūrāh* as a battle cry in Jud 5:12 (cf. Ps 7:6; 44:23; 59:4; Isa 51:9).
- His glory is his self as glorified by God's gracious presence. It glorifies God in music and song (Ps 3:3; 7:6; 16:9; 30:12; 62:6-7; 84:11). God's glory is manifest in and to him, as he sings his song, and restores his glory, like the light of the morning sun shining on a person. By performing this song, the psalmist experiences the theophany of the Lord in himself as his temple.
- Once mentally and spiritually awake, he can awaken the dawn with the musical performance of praise.
- Vow of praise: addressed to God (10-12)
 - This is more than a conventional vow of praise, for in 12 the praise already begins.
 - The psalmist promises to praise the Lord with music 'among the nations' (see Ps 18:49; cf. 9:11; 93:13,10; 105:1; 126:2), because God's mercy and faithfulness, which have saved him (cf. 4), rule heaven and earth (cf. Ps 36:5). Through his praise he will proclaim God's glory and grace to the nations.
 - His song of praise which celebrates God's universal kindness, ushers in the dawn of a new day by announcing his gracious presence and rule internationally, in anticipation of his universal theophany as king.
 - The same words which were used to petition God in 6, are used in 12.
 - The psalmist overcomes his enemies by petition and praise.
 - Note the use of 57:8-12 in Psalm 108:1-5.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- Introit for Ash Wednesday
- Reading for St Mark's Day in the three year lectionary
- Devotional use.
 - Traditional use of this psalm in the morning prayers of the church
 - Proclamation by the psalm of the dawn of day in the hearts of the faithful by the visitation of Christ, the morning star (see 2 Pet 1:19; Rev 22:16; cf. Luke 1:78f)
 - By the appearance of Christ, the hearts of the faithful became his temple and are glorified by him.
- Use in spiritual warfare
 - The image of devil as like a “roaring lion” in 1 Pet 5:8
 - Rescue of people by Jesus from the realm of satan with his

- “rebuke” of the unclean spirits
- Deliverance from cosmic evil powers by Christ
- Victory over the powers of darkness by taking refuge in the Lord, praying for his intervention, and praising him
- Liturgical use.
 - The early church alluded to 57:6, 12 in its proper prefaces before the **Sanctus**, the song of victory in the Eucharistic liturgy.
 - Through the appearance of God's Son and his presence in the sacrament, the glory of God is now manifest all over the world.

PSALM 26

1. Text and Translation

- a. *Lo' 'em'ād* in 1 can be construed either as a circumstantial clause, “without faltering”, or as the main verb after two parenthetical clauses, “since I myself walk in my integrity and I trust in YHWH, I do not falter”.
- b. While the Kethib (the written consonantal text) reads *tserūphāh* in 2, the Qere (the pointed text for reading) reads *tsorphāh* (“refine”), a Qal emphatic imperative.
- c. *Methē shāw'* in 4 refers either to deceitful people (Job 11:11), or idolaters, since *shāw'* can be a euphemism for an idol (see Ps 24:4; 31:6; Jer 18:15).
- d. In 6 the noun *niqqāyōn*, which is derived from the adjective *nāqī* : exempt, innocent, clean, means both cleanness and innocence (Ps 73:13; Gen 20:5; cf Ps 24:4).
- e. In 6 the Polel cohortative form *wa'asōbebāh* indicates that the psalmist will wash his hands “in order to gather round” (cf. Ps 7:7) the altar (cf Gen 2:11 and Num 21:4 for the use of this verb to describe semi-circular arrangement).
- f. The LXX reads the Qal infinitive *lishmō'a* : “to hear” rather than the Hiphil defective form of *lehashmī'a* in 7 in the sense of “proclaim”, as in Ps 51:8; 66:8; 106:2; 143:8.
- g. The object of *lehashmī'a* in 7 is either *tōdāh* with *beqōl* understood as “loudly” or else *kol-niphle'ōthekā* (*all your miracles*) from the second half of the verse with *beqōl* as a construct noun before *tōdāh* (“with the sound of thanksgiving”).
- h. *'Asaph nephesh* in 9 means to take away a person's life-breath (see Judg 18:25; cf Ps 104:29; Job 34:14).
- i. In 9 *'anshē dāmīm* are murderers (Ps 55:23; 59:3; 139:19) who are abhorred by God and excluded from his presence (Ps 5:5-6; cf 11:5-6).
- j. While *zimmāh* is used secularly for a scheme or plan, it is used liturgically, as in 10, for some scandalous behaviour, such as murder (cf Hos 6:9), or some form of sexual impurity such as incest (cf Lev 18:17; 20:14), rape (cf Judg 20:6), adultery (cf Job 31:11), and prostitution (cf Lev 19:29; Jer 13:27; Ezek 16:27,43,58; 23:21,27,29,44), or idolatry as spiritual prostitution (cf Ezek 22:9; 23:48,49; 24:13).

- k. While most scholars argue that *maqḥēlīm* in 12 refers to the assembly of Israel at the temple, the use of the feminine form of the same noun in Ps 68:26 with reference to the procession of a choir into the sanctuary argues for the translation “choirs” or “congregation assembled and led by a choir”.

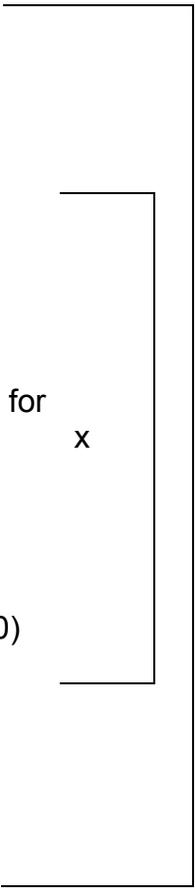
2. Genre: divergent opinions

- Individual lament (Gunkel): no description of trouble
- Prayer of unjustly accused person (Kraus. See 1 Kgs 8:31-32 for the basic situation; cf. Ps 7,17): no reference to accusers, no oath of innocence and only an implied charge of apostasy in 4-5.
- Protestation of innocence by king in royal ritual (Eaton; cf Ps 101)
 - The king used to bless the Lord at the temple (see 1 Kgs 8:14-21, 55-61; 1 Chron 29:10-19).
 - The king was required to be a person of integrity (Ps 18:23,25; 101:6) and to behave with integrity (Ps 101:2).
- Prayer for purification of a priest (Mosca) or Levite (Briggs) before service at the temple
 - Contact with the altar and the area around it was restricted to the priests
 - Washing of hands and feet before service in the temple (Exod 30:17-21; 40:30-32)
 - Performance of the song of thanksgiving by the Levitical singers as they stood on a level area in front of the altar (2 Chron 5:11-14; 7:4-6)
- Prayer for the admission of a pilgrim at the temple (Craigie)
 - The assertions of 26:4-5 and 9-10 are patterned on the scrutiny of the people by the priests in the entrance liturgies found in Ps 15 and 24:3-6 (cf. Ps 5:4-7; Is 33:14-16; Jer 7:1-11; Ezek 18:5-18).
 - The movement in the psalm reflects the journey of the pilgrim from “walking” (1,3,11) to “gathering round” the altar (6) to “standing” on level ground (12), such as occurred on the Feast of Tabernacles.
 - This is backed up by the canonical sequence of psalms 24-26 with their linkage by the following catchwords
 - ❖ *Lift up soul* in 24:4 and 25:1
 - ❖ *Innocence* in 24:4 and in 26:6
 - ❖ *Empty thing* as an idol in 24:4 and 26:4
 - ❖ *My eyes* in 25:2 and 26:1
 - ❖ *I trust* in 25:15 and 26:3
 - ❖ *My feet* in 25:15 and 26:12
 - ❖ *Integrity* in 25:21 and 26:1,11
 - ❖ *Redeem* in 25:22 and 26:11
 - ❖ *Have mercy on me* in 25:16 and 26:11

3. Literary Features

- The inclusio of *tummī* in 1 and 11
- The framework of imperative petitions: four in 1-2 and two in 11 with a negative jussive plea in 9-10
- The chiasmic structure of 4-5 formed by the use of the verb *yāshab*
- The use of twenty lcs suffixes and six 2 ms suffixes
- An inventory of the body with most of its main parts: the kidneys (2), the heart (2), the eyes (3), the hands (6) and the foot (12). The progression is from the inside to the outside, from thought to action.

4. Structure: loose chiasmic pattern

- a. Petition for purification: 1-3
- Request for judgment with assertion of integrity (1)
 - Request for purification with a confession of faith in God's kindness and faithfulness (2-3).
- b. Dissociation from the wicked: 4-5
- Act of separation from idolaters (4)
 - Renunciation of association with the wicked (5)
- c. Performance of purification: 6-8
- Washing for admission to the sanctuary for performance of thanksgiving (6-7)
 - Declaration of love for God's house (8).
- d. Plea for deliverance from death with sinners: 9-10
- Rescue from people with blood on their hands (9)
 - Their involvement in sexual immorality and bribery (10)
- e. Petition for redemption: 11-12
- Promise of integrity in conduct (11a)
 - Petition for redemption (11b)
 - Vow of eulogy to the Lord (12)
- 

5. Exegesis

- a. Petition for purification: 1-3
- The psalmist asks the Lord to “judge” him, ie to right what is wrong with him and to vindicate him as a righteous person who does the will of God (cf. Ps 7:9; 35:24; 43:1). This contrasts with the pagan practice of scrutinising the innards of a sacrificed animal to “descry” the will of the gods.

- He makes this request, because he has conducted himself with integrity as is evident in his unfaltering trust in the Lord (cf. Ps 18:36; 37:31).
 - By asserting his “integrity” (lit. wholeness or completeness), he claims to have been honest with God and to possess a clear conscience (see Ps 7:8; 25:21; 41:12; 101:2; cf. also 1 Kgs 9:4; Pr 2:7; 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6 for “walking with integrity”).
 - While the “kidneys” of a person were believed to be the source of his most secret passions and desires, the “heart” was considered the seat of the conscious mind (cf. Ps 7:10; Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12).
 - Like a metal worker or silversmith, God is asked to “test” (cf Ps 7:9; 11:5; 17:3; 66:10; 139:23) the psalmist, to “prove” his purity (cf Exod 15:25; 20:20; Deut 8:2,16; 13:3; 33:8) and to “refine” him (cf Ps 17:3; 66:10; 105:19) of his impurity (see Keel, 183-86).
 - He makes this request for purification, because he has depended on God’s “loving kindness” and “truth” for his orientation and guidance in life (cf. God’s direction by his truth in Ps 25:5) rather than the evil influence of idols (cf. Isa 33:15; Ezek 18:6,12,15).
- b. Dissociation from the wicked: 4-5
- Since open and secret idolaters are cursed by God (cf Deut 27:15) and excluded from his presence (Ps 24:4b), the psalmist dissociates himself from them.
 - He also rejects the wicked whom the Lord condemns and punishes for their evildoing (cf. Ps 11:4-7; 15:4a).
- c. Performance of purification: 6-8
- These verses are spoken by the psalmist either before he goes around the altar or else before he stands in front of it.
 - They consist of two performative utterances, the first spoken as part of an act of purification and the second as declaration of love for God’s temple.
 - First, the psalmist performs an act of purification by washing his hands, so that he can approach the most holy altar in a state of ritual purity, without dying from sacrilege.
 - The speaker could be either a priest/levitical musician (see Exod 30:17-21; 40:30-32), or else a layperson (see Ps 73:13; Deut 21:6; cf. Keel, 123-26).
 - As a result of the purification, he could approach the altar and either perform or participate in the performance of the thanksgiving song (cf. Lev 7:12-15; Jer 33:11; 116:12-19).
 - The song of thanksgiving would recount the Lord’s marvellous works (cf Ps 30; 107).
 - Secondly, the psalmist addresses the Lord and declares his ongoing “love” for the Lord’s house (cf Ps 122:6; Isa 66:10 for the love for Zion).

- The temple is a “safe place’ (*mā’ōn*) both for the Lord and for the psalmist.
 - The Holy of Holies was the “dwelling place” (*mishkān*) for God's glory (cf 1 Kgs 8:11-12).
 - At the temple God showed his glory on the upright (2 Chron 7:1-3; cf. Ps 84:11).
 - The love of the psalmist for the temple is a powerful reason for his admission into it.
- d. Plea for deliverance from death with sinners: 9-10
- If sinners, who had given or taken bribes (see Ps 15:5; Isa 33:15; cf. Deut 27:25), came into God's presence, they came under God's condemnation (see Ps 1:5; Isa 1:27-28; 33:14; cf. Ps 104:35).
 - If people whose hands had been defiled by murder or sexual immorality approached God, they forfeited their lives (see Ps 5:4-6; Isa 1:16; 33:15; Jer 7:6,9; Ezek 18:10; cf. the use of in Ps 55:23; 59:2; 139:19-20).
 - Since the psalmist has voluntarily submitted to God's judgment before entering the sanctuary, he asks to be spared their fate when he does enter it.
- e. Petition for redemption with vows of integrity and blessing.
- The psalmist promises to act with integrity in the future as he has done in the past.
 - He therefore asks the Lord to treat him favourably by “redeeming” him from the fate of sinners.
 - If his prayer is answered, he will be able to stand “straight” and “secure” with his foot on a “straight place” in the future as he has done in the past (see the use of *mīshōr* as a “level place” in Ps 27:11; 143:10 and as “uprightness” in Ps 45:7; 67:4).
 - Finally, he promises to “bless” the Lord either as a member of the Levitical choir or in the assembled congregation at the great festivals by acknowledging him as the giver of blessing.
 - See the handout: *The Language for the Performance of Praise* for the performance of blessing.

6. Liturgical and Devotional Use

- It is set for 15 Pentecost A: link with the demand of Jesus for self-denial in Matt 16:21-26 and Paul's appeal for the presentation of our bodies as living sacrifices in Rom 12:1-8.
- It is traditionally used by Catholic priests in preparation for the performance of the Mass.
- It is suitable for people to prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper.
 - We come to the Lord's altar and join in his sacrificial banquet.

- We submit to his purifying judgment in order to escape condemnation (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-32) and to be vindicated by him and his forgiveness.
- We perform the Eucharistic thank offering to the Father with him as the leader of our thanksgiving.

PSALM 22

1. Text and Translation

- a. *‘Ayyeleth* in 1 is construed by the LXX as *‘eyaluth* (strength) from 20.
- b. 2b is either a continuation of the question in 2a: "Why are you far from my help, from the words of my groaning?", or else a statement with either "my God" as the subject of *rāchōq* or else *diberē sha’agāthi* as its subject: "You/the words of my groaning are far from my help".
- c. Verse 4 can be taken in one of two ways.
 - One can follow the MT and take *yōshēb* as a construct with the second half of the verse, ie "the enthroned one of the praises of Israel".
 - One can follow the LXX and take it as an absolute noun with the first half of the verse: "But you dwell / are enthroned as holy, the praise of Israel".
- d. In 9 the MT reads an imperative *gōl*: "roll" or "commit", whereas the LXX construes it as in indicative *gāl*: "he committed".
- e. While the MT reads *mabtīchi* as Hiphil participle in 10: "making me secure", the LXX construes it as noun *mibtāchi*: "my confidence".
- f. In 17 the word *kā’ari* ("like a lion") makes little sense. The LXX which translated it as "they pierced" seems to presuppose the reading: "they dug" from *kārāh* I, or "they tied together" from *kārāh* IV, or "they are shrivelled up" from *kārāh* V.
- g. *‘Abītāni* in 22 is best taken as a precative perfect: "May you answer me" after an imperative and translated as an imperative: "answer me; cf. 3.
- h. Since 27b is probably a toast given by the host to his guests at a sacrificial banquet, it need not be couched in the third person as is done in the LXX; cf. Ps 69:33.
- i. The imperfect forms of the verbs from 27–32 are best taken as jussives which express the wish of the psalmist to include these groups in the celebration of his deliverance.
- j. The perfect tense form of *‘akelū* in 30 within a series of imperfect/jussive verbs makes it suspect. It is best construed as two words: *‘ak lō*: 'Indeed to him' with the assumption that the *waw* has been copied twice (dittography) by accident.

- k. Many scholars emend *dīshenē* (“fat ones”) to *yīshenē* (“sleepers”) on the assumption that the verses are similar in sense. It is, however, possible to take the two lines as a contrast between those who are very much alive and those who are dead.
- l. Instead of *zera’* in 31, the LXX reads *zir’i*: “my seed”.
- m. *Yābō’ū* is best taken with 31, as in the LXX, and read as *Yābō’* with the assumption that the *waw* is a case of dittography: “the generation which is to come”.
- n. *Nōlād* is a Niphal participle used for the immediate future.

2. Genre

- Individual lament: complaint of an afflicted person with the following unusual features
 - Mention of God's dealings with Israel's ancestors in 5-6 which is usually found in national laments
 - Imperative call to praise in 24-25 which is usually found in a corporate hymn of praise
 - Jussive invitations to worship in 27-32 usually found in hymns of praise (e.g. 68:29,31; 96:11-12a; 97:1; 98:7-9a; 99:1,3; 107:8-9,15-16,21-22,31-32; 138:4-6; 145:4-7,10-12,21; 148:5-6,13; 149:2-9; 150:6; cf. the individual lament in 69 with the addition of 32-36).
- Prophetic psalm of David: traditional classification.
 - Note the scope of the verbs in 27-32 which could be construed as prophecies or promises.
 - Note the role of the speaker in 23-32 as a leader of praise in Israel and a person of international influence.

3. Literary Features

- Inclusio in the main sections
 - *Be far* in 1,12, and 19
 - *Answer* in 2 and 22
 - *My God* in 2 and 11
 - *Deliver* in 9 and 21
 - *Hide* in 23 and 31; cf. 18
 - *Seed* in 24 and 31
- Repetition of phrases
 - *They surround me* in 13 and 17
 - *In the assembly* in 23 and 26
- Repetition of key words
 - *Praise* in 4,23,24,26,27
 - *Trust* in 5,6,10
 - *Despise* in 8,18
 - *Belly* in 10,11
 - *Fear* in 24,26

➤ *Prostration* in 28,30

4. Structure

- a. First lament: 2-6
 - Complaint to God about his remoteness (2-3)
 - Confession of faith in God as Israel's ancestral deliverer (4-6)
- b. Second lament: 7-12
 - Lament about his mockery by the people (7-9)
 - Confession to God of his provision for him since birth (10-11)
 - Petition for God not to be remote (12)
- c. Third lament: 13-22
 - Lament about the menace wild animals and of God (13–16)
 - Description of menace from bulls and lions (13–14)
 - Dissolution like water and wax (15)
 - Desiccation like a piece of broken pottery (16^a)
 - Complaint about God as his executioner (16^b).
 - Lament about the menace of evil people (17–19)
 - Attack by human hunters with dogs (17)
 - Execution by bandits (18)
 - Division of clothing as booty (19)
 - Invocation of holy name and petitions to God (20–22)
 - For the Lord's help in place of his remoteness (20)
 - For rescue from human hunters with dogs (21)
 - For rescue from the wild animals (22).
- d. Vows of Praise: 23–32
 - First vow (23–25)
 - Promise of praise in liturgical assembly (23)
 - Call to all Israel to join in praise for deliverance (24–25)
 - Second vow (26–32)
 - Promise of votive offering with a sacrificial banquet (26)
 - Invitation for participation as guests (27–32)
 - ❖ To the poor (27)
 - ❖ To the nations (28–29)
 - ❖ To the living and the dead (30)
 - ❖ To future generations (31–32)

5. Exegesis

- a. The psalmist's first lament at his abandonment by God: 2-6

- The psalm begins with the double invocation of God by the general term: "My God" (see Ps 63:1; 68:24; 89:26; 102:24; 118:28; 140:6) rather than by his holy name.
 - In this complaint which he likens to the roaring of a lion, the psalmist demands to know the reason and purpose of his 'abandonment' by God (cf. Ps 9:10; 16:10; 27:9; 37:28,33; 71:9,11,18; 94:14; 119:8).
 - The imagery of 2-3 explores the extent of his abandonment in two dimensions.
 - Spatially, God is remote from him in his trouble
 - Temporally, God is unresponsive and inattentive to his calling on him by day and night.
 - In the face of his alienation from God the psalmist recalls God's past dealings with his ancestors in a confession which protests at his present refusal to answer his plea.
 - God was enthroned as their holy King in his earthly and heavenly temple.
 - In their worship they showed their trust in him by crying to him for help in their trouble.
 - He saved them and so became the content of their 'praises' (see Ps 78:4; Exod 5:11; Isa 63:7; 64:40), by which they proclaimed his holy gracious presence (cf Ps 99).
 - Since God delivered them, they were not put to shame by their enemies as a result of their misplaced confidence in the Lord.
 - The first lament then contrasts God's refusal to save the psalmist with his readiness to save his ancestors.
- b. The psalmist's second lament at his humiliation by people: 7-12.
- The remembrance of God's treatment of his ancestors merely heightens his misery as someone who is now treated by people as if he were an unclean, despicable worm or maggot (cf. Job 25:6; Isa 41:14).
 - Whereas God had protected his ancestors from public humiliation, human beings and his own kinsfolk treat him with sheer scorn which is expressed in three ways:
 - By verbal ridicule.
 - By pulling faces or making a rude noise with their lips.
 - By wagging their heads to ward off bad luck (cf. Ps 109:25; 2 Kgs 19:21; Job 16:4; Lam 2:15).
 - They mock the psalmist's reliance on the Lord
 - They throw his own words back at him by telling him to "turn over" or "commit" his case to the Lord (cf. Ps 37:5; Pr 16:3).
 - They imply that his suffering proves that either God no longer "delights" in him, or he no longer delights in God (cf. Ps 18:19; 41:11).

- In the face of the mockery of his dependence on God the psalmist recalls God's past care and commitment to him personally as 'his God' (cf 2).
 - Like a midwife, God had taken him from his mother's womb and given him to her to nurse (cf. Ps 71:6).
 - He has always been “thrown” (cf. Ps 51:11; 55:11; 71:9) on God for his security, like a child with its mother.
 - This remembrance of God's past protection leads him to ask God for an end to his remoteness (see 20; cf. Ps 35:22; 38:21; 71:12).
 - He recalls his complaint in 2.
 - He is in such terrible trouble that no one else can defend him.
- c. The psalmist's third lament at the menace of his enemies: 13-22.
- After the initial petition with its reference to his trouble in 12 the psalmist describes in more detail what occupies the space vacated by God.
 - The enemies who surround him in 13-14, 17a and 18b-19 and whom God uses to put him to death in 16b
 - His own deadly condition in 15-16a and 17b-18a.
 - He compares his enemies surrealistically to wild animals who threaten him with their demonic ferocity (cf. Keel, 86-88).
 - He envisages himself surrounded by a herd of huge bulls.
 - These “kings” of the domesticated animals have gone wild and now threaten him.
 - They seek to “devour” him alive like a roaring lion which tears its prey apart with its teeth.
 - He describes his own condition in a series of stark images.
 - The disintegration of himself and his bones, like “water” poured out on the earth
 - The dissolution of his heart and his innards, like “wax” melted by fire
 - The desiccation of his strength and mouth by God himself, like a “pot” placed on the ashes of an open fire
 - In the second part of the lament (17-19) he describes the attack of “evil-doers” on him.
 - His enemies corner him like a gang of thugs with hunting dogs or jackals (cf Ps 59:14-15).
 - Since his hands and feet are wounded (?) and his bones are out of joint, he can't defend himself and escape from them.
 - Like bandits who have a victim at their mercy, or soldiers about to execute a criminal, they look him over for something valuable and divide up his clothes among themselves as their booty.
 - The lament culminates in a series of petitions in 20-22 which mention the menacing powers in reverse order to 13-14 and 17-19: dogs, lions, bulls.

- In 20 the psalmist calls on the Lord by his powerful saving name for the first time in the psalm which brings about his deliverance.
 - The first petition picks up the complaint from 2 and repeats the prayer from 12 with an urgent request for help.
 - This is followed by the plea for God to answer his prayer by rescuing him from his enemies and saving him from certain death.
 - The dire threat to his life is described in four images: having his throat cut by a sword, having his “desolate self” (cf Ps 25:16; 35:17) at the mercy of a dog, being torn apart by the jaws of a lion and being gored by the horns of wild bulls.
 - The montage of imagery in this part of the psalm depicts the social degradation, demonic menace and personal devitalisation which result from the absence of God and his salvation.
- d. The psalmist's vow of praise: 23–32
- The psalmist first makes a vow to praise God (23) with the words of a hymn which anticipate that act (24–25).
 - He promises to praise the Lord in the full “liturgical assembly” (see 26; cf. Ps 26:12; 40:9-10; 107:32; 109:30; 149:1) by proclaiming the holy name which he had invoked in his trouble (20).
 - The congregation is understood as an extended family with all members as his brothers and guests (cf. Ps 122:8).
 - The words of his hymn of praise are given in 24-25.
 - In it he calls on all “God-fearers” (cf. Ps 66:16; 115:11; 118:4; 135:20) and all Israel to join with him in “praising” the Lord, “glorifying him” (c. Ps 50:15,23; 86:9,12) and “revering” him (cf. Ps 33:8).
 - The hymn of praise does not, however, focus on the Lord's dealing with Israel as a nation, as is usual, but on his hearing the prayer of this “afflicted” person as a person of national importance.
 - This hymn of praise then confirms the belief that the Lord hears the prayers of the “afflicted” (see Ps 9:12,18; 34:6; cf 10:17; 69:33) and saves them (see Ps 10:12; 12:5; 18:27; 35:10; 140:12).
 - The psalmist then promises in 26 that he will not only praise the Lord in the liturgical assembly but will also fulfil his vows by inviting everybody to a huge act of worship consisting of
 - The presentation of burnt offerings as an act of 'divine service' with a hymn of praise and prostration to the Lord led by the psalmist

- The presentation of peace offerings to prepare a sacrificial banquet for the whole congregation
- The sacrificial banquet with meat from the peace offerings for invited guests who would receive his toast and share in the divine gift of vitality
- The list of **seven** categories of invited guests in 27–32 all-embracing spatially, socially and temporally.
 - First, he invites all true Israelites who are **humbly dependant** on the Lord (see Ps 9:12,18; 10:12,17; 25:9; 34:2; 37:11; 69:32; 76:9; 117:6; 149:4) and who **seek** the Lord (see Ps 9:10; 24:6; 34:4,10; 69:32; 77:2; 78:34; 105:4) to eat the sacrificial meal, praise the Lord, and receive the toast of life (cf. Ps 69:32).
 - Secondly, in words which are unparalleled in the OT apart from Isa 45:22-25, he invites **all the earth** and **all the families of its nations** to “remember” the Lord and “turn back” to him by “prostrating themselves” before him (cf. Ps 86:9; 96:9), so acknowledging him as their true ruler (see 4; cf. Ps 145:11-13).
 - Thirdly, he invites all classes of people from **all the wealthy**: “those who are fat” (cf. Ps 94:14; Isa 30:23) enough to keep themselves alive, to **all the dying/dead** (cf. the related terms in Ps 28:1; 30:3; 88:4; 115:17; 143:7) who cannot keep themselves alive, to bow down and prostrate themselves before the Lord.
 - Fourthly, he invites all **subsequent generations** to join him in “serving” the Lord (cf. Ps 2:11; 100:2; 102:22), so that they too will be able to proclaim the lordship of God and his righteous deliverance to future generations (cf. Ps 102:18-22).
- The act of worship envisaged in 23-32 surpasses what was normal or even possible in ancient Israel.
 - The nearest parallels were the sacrificial banquets held by the kings for the nation on special occasions (see 2 Sam 6:18-19; 1 Kgs 8:62-63, 65-66; 1 Chron 29:20-22; 2 Chron 15:11; 35:7-9).
 - The king was the only person who could lead the whole congregation in praise through the levitical choir (see Ps 18:49; cf. 1 Chron 16:4-42; 23:30-31; 2 Chr 7:4-6).
 - The projected celebration in 23-32 regards the deliverance of this afflicted person as an act of international significance which demonstrates God's sovereignty over the nations and involves all people on earth in Israel's worship, whether they have lived, are living, or are yet to live.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- While Ps 22:1-24 is set for reading on Good Friday in ABC, Ps 22:25-31 is

- set for 2 Lent B and 5 Easter B and Ps 22:19-28 in Proper 7 B.
- The reference to Psalm 22 in the New Testament.
 - This psalm is alluded to and quoted most frequently in the accounts of Christ's crucifixion.
 - ❖ In Mark 15:34 and Matt 27:46 Jesus prays Ps 22:1 after three hours of darkness at the climax of his passion which leads to the conversion of the centurion in partial fulfilment of Ps 22:28.
 - ❖ The synoptic Gospels allude to parts of this psalm with reference to Christ's enemies: 22:7 in Mark 15:29 and Matt 27:39; 22:8 in Matt 27:43; 22:18 in Mark 15:24, Matt 27:35 and Luke 23:34, while John quotes 22:18 in John 19:24.
 - Hebrews 2:12 quotes Ps 22:22 to explain the role of Jesus the high priest as the Messianic leader of the congregation in its praise of his heavenly Father in which he proclaims his Father's name to his brothers.
 - This is a prophetic Messianic psalm which is fulfilled by the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus
 - The canonical arrangement indicates its messianic significance since it comes after two royal psalms: an intercession for the king before battle in 20, and thanksgiving and intercession for a king after battle in 21 (see also the verbal links: *'ānāh* in 20:2,7,10 and 22:2,21; *'āzab* in 20:3 and 22:12,20; *yeshū'āh* in 20:6; 21:1,6 and 22:2; *hōshī'a* in 20:7,10 and 22:22; and *bātach* in 21:8 and 22:4-5.
 - Jesus alone plumbed the depths of suffering from abandonment by God to the demonic powers as envisaged in this psalm which he prayed on the cross.
 - He is the host of the Eucharistic celebration of his suffering and deliverance from death to which he invites the humble.
 - By his vicarious suffering he ushered in the kingdom of his heavenly Father here on earth.
 - He calls all people to repent and acknowledge God the Father as their sovereign Lord (cf. Luke 24:47)

PSALM 88

1. Text and Translation

- a. *Yōm* in v.2 can mean “on the day when” or “when” (cf. Ps 56:4; 78:42).
- b. The sense of *‘eyāl*, which is found only in v.5, is uncertain. It probably means either “help” or “strength”.
- c. *Bōr tachtīyyōth* in v.7 means “the pit of lowest places”; cf. Lam 3:55; Ps 63:10; 86:13; Ezek 26:20; 31:14, 16, 18; 32:18,24; Isa 44:23.
- d. *Machashikkīm* in v.7 is a plural of intensity, “utter darkness”.
- e. In v.7 the LXX reads *ūbetzalmāveth*, “and in the shadow of death”, rather than “in the depths”. *Metzōlōth* usually refers to the bottom of the sea (cf. Exod 15:5; Neh 9:11).
- f. *Tō’ēbōth* in v.9 is a plural of intensity, “something utterly repulsive”.
- g. Stretching out of the palms in v.10 is a gesture of entreaty or petition (Ps 28:2; 143:6; 1 Kgs 8:54; Isa 1:15).
- h. In v.16 the LXX reads *weyāgē’a*, “weary”, rather than *wegōwē’a* “expiring” or “close to death”.
- i. *Charōnwekā* in v.17 is probably a plural of intensity, “your blazing heat/strong fury”.
- j. The use of *machshāk* in v.19 is
 - MT: “darkness” or “a dark place”, “my close friends are darkness” or “darkness is my close friend”.
 - The LXX, some Hebrew manuscripts and Jerome read *mechashshēk*, “My friends (are) keeping away (from me)”.

2. Genre

A truncated individual complaint which Seybold has classified as one of those prayed by a sick person (Ps 38, 39, 40, 69, 102)

- a. Single petition in 3 with reports of praying in 2, 10^b and 14
- b. No mention of enemies in the complaint

- c. No confession of confidence apart from the invocation of the Lord as “the God of my salvation” in 2^a
- d. No vow of praise but its replacement by the rhetorical questions about the impossibility of praising God in death in 11-13 which turns praise into a complaint to God.

3. Literary features

- a. The threefold invocation of the Lord in 2, 10, 14-15
- b. The reference to praying in 2-3, 10^b and 14 with the progression from night in 2 to morning in 14
- c. The parallel arrangement of 2-10^a and 14-19 with 10^b-13 as the centre of the psalm
 - Persistent praying in 2 and 14 (cf 10) with the repetition of *tephillāthi* (my prayer)
 - The threat of death in 4-6 and 15-16 with the repetition of *naphshī* (my throat/life) in 4 and 15
 - Drowning in God's wrath in 7-8 and 17-18 with the repetition of *‘ālay* in 8 and 17-18
 - Alienation from others in 9-10^a and 19 with the repetition of *hirchaqtā mimmenni* (“you have removed from me”) and *meyuddā’ay* in 9 and 19 (“my acquaintances”)
- d. Repetition of other key words
 - “Day” in 2,10,18
 - “The dead” in 6,11
 - “Darkness” in 7,13,19
 - “Grave” in 6,12
 - “Miracle/wonder” in 11,13
- e. The word-play on *‘innāh* (afflict), *‘ōni* (affliction) and *‘āni* (afflicted person)
 - God's wrath “afflicts” the psalmist (8).
 - The psalmist weeps at his “affliction” (10).
 - He is therefore “afflicted” to the point of death, “destitute” without power and a livelihood, and “dependent” on God for his survival (16).
- f. Note the contrast between praying all day long in 10 and being drowned by wrath all day long in 18.

4. Structure

- a. Superscription (1)

- b. First complaint about alienation from God with a plea for attention (2-10^a)
 - Report of nightly prayer (2-3)
 - Description of deadly state (4-6)
 - Complaint about the overwhelming effect of God's wrath (7-8)
 - Complaint about God's alienation of him from others (9-10^a)
- c. Appeal to God about the loss of praise to him (10b-13)
 - Report of constant prayer (10^b)
 - Content of the prayer: God's loss of praise (11-13)
- d. Second complaint about God's wrath (14-19)
 - Report of morning prayer (14)
 - Protest at God's life-threatening rejection (15-16)
 - Complaint about the overwhelming effect of God's wrath (17-18)
 - Complaint about God's alienation of him from others (19)

5. Exegesis

a. Superscription (1)

(1) Origin: a psalm from the Korahite collection (Ps 42-49, 84-85, 87) ascribed to Heman the Ezrahite who was one of the heads of three guilds of Levitical musicians at the temple (1 Chr 6:33; 15:17,19; 16:41-42; 25:1-6).

(2) Performance

- "Song" sung to "instrumental music"
- To be "chanted" according to the tune "The suffering of affliction"
- *Maskil* : "model psalm" or musical term

b. The nightly complaint (2-10a)

(1) Recurrent nightly plea for "attention" (cf Ps 17:6; 31:2; 71:2; 86:1; 102:2) to the psalmist's cry for help to the Lord who is his only hope of deliverance from death.

(2) The nightly threat of death (4-6)

(a) The psalmist is fed up with nightly "descent" into Sheol (4).

(b) Note the words, images and names for the state of death (see Keel, 62-76; cf. 35-56).

- The Grave
- Sheol
- The cistern/pit

- Sheer darkness
- The depths of the sea
- Abaddon = Destruction
- The Forgotten Land.

(c) Note the various images for the dead.

- Warriors deprived of strength
- People “exempted” from the duties of worship and without any social obligation
- People forgotten and uncared for even by God like the slain warriors in a mass grave

(3) The nightly consignment to Sheol by God and nightly affliction by his wrath (7-8)

(a) Note the shift from grave imagery to sea imagery.

(b) Note the shift from the description of a nightly descent to Sheol to the charge that God places him there in the lowest reaches and unleashes anger and the powers of chaos loose on him in the form of 'breaking waves' (cf 2 Sam. 22:5; Ps 42:7; 93:4; Jonah 2:3).

(4) His estrangement by God from those whom he knows by making him as repulsive as a leper (9^a).

(5) As a result he feels locked up as in a prison, which causes him to faint at his affliction by God (9^b-10^a).

c. The daily appeal (10^b-13)

(1) Ritual gesture: open hands in entreaty and petition as the Lord is addressed by name (cf Keel, 321)

(2) Appeal to the Lord's self interest in the form of rhetorical questions (cf Ps 6:66; 30:9) where the argument runs as follows:

(a) God depends on human beings rather than idols to proclaim his name and bear witness to his grace in the world.

(b) They do so with songs of thanksgiving after he has revealed his “loving kindness” (*chesed*) and “faithfulness” (*emūnāh*) by “vindicating” them (*tzedāqāh*) in some “miraculous way” (*pele*’).

(c) Since the dead are excluded from divine worship by their weakness and impurity, they cannot praise God, even if he

should perform a miracle for them in Sheol (cf Ps 6:6; 30:9; 115:17; Isa 38:18-19).

(d) It is therefore in God's best interest to hear the psalmist's prayer and deliver him from death.

(3) These questions turn Israel's praises into a complaint (cf Ps 77:7-9).

d. The morning complaint (14-19)

(1) Note that the morning is the traditional time for God's act of vindication and symbol of it (see Ps 46:5; 90:14; 143:8; 2 Sam 23:3-4; Zeph 3:5).

(2) God has rejected the psalmist for no good reason and is no longer accessible to him (15).

(3) Since God has treated the psalmist as his enemy by unleashing his "terrors" (*'emekā*) on him which are normally reserved for God's enemies (cf Exod 15:16; 23:27; Deut 32:25; Job 9:27; 13:21), he is "destitute" and has been close to death from his youth onward (16).

(4) God's "fury" and "horror" overwhelm and silence him like a drowning person (17-18; cf Ps 40:2; 42:8; 69:2-3,15-16).

(5) God has estranged him so fully from his nearest and dearest, that all he experiences is darkness (19). Thus the psalm that began with the holy name ends with the word "darkness".

6. Theological Reflections

a. This psalm, which is not used at all in the three year lectionary, is well suited for ministry to a person in a state of deep depression.

b. It expresses what Luther called the theology of the cross, for paradoxically we get to know God by suffering, dying and being damned, ie by trial and temptation.

c. While this psalm is about the invasion of life by death, it does not regard death as divine rejuvenating power (as in paganism), or as a natural spiritual state (a la Kubler Ross), but rightly regards it as our enemy closely allied with God's wrath.

d. In this psalm Sheol, which had been the domain of the Canaanite deities Mot and Yam, is stripped of its sacral power and is no longer just regarded as the home of the dead but rather a state of exclusion from God's gracious presence where only his wrath is experienced.

- e. Its depths were plumbed only by Christ who not only “descended” into hell for us, but was also miraculously raised from the dead, so that by hearing his voice they could rise up and praise God.

PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING AND CONFESSION

The Performance of Thanksgiving

1. Individual thanksgiving psalms are closely related to individual laments
 - They fulfil the vow of thanksgiving found in many of these psalms.
 - They were offered at the temple after the Lord had heard the prayer and had delivered the person in trouble (cf. Job 33:19-28).
 - Since they accompanied a sacrifice, the same word: *todah* is used for the 'thank offering' of an animal as for the song of 'thanksgiving'.

2. The procedure for the presentation of thanksgiving probably went as follows.
 - The person who presented the thank offering came with his invited guests to the temple at one of the three pilgrim festivals (Jer 33:10-11).
 - He presented a male sheep or goat for slaughter at the temple together with some loaves of leavened and unleavened bread (Lev 7:11-15).
 - A temple musician or group of musicians led him in the song of thanksgiving before and as the animal was presented to the priest as the Lord's representative (cf. 2 Chr 30:21-22).
 - After the slaughter of the animal and the pouring of its blood against the altar, the person who presented the thank offering prepared its meat with the other food as a sacrificial banquet for his invited guests.
 - The meat from the sacrifice had to be eaten on the day of its presentation (Lev. 7:15).
 - The thank offering served a number of purposes for the person who presented it.
 - By it he fulfilled the vow which he had made to the Lord in his trouble.
 - By presenting it he formally thanked the Lord for his deliverance and bore public testimony to the congregation of the Lord's graciousness and readiness to hear the prayers of his people.
 - By it he joined his praise with the praise of the congregation and was thereby reintegrated as a 'justified' person into the community of the *chasidim* who had experienced and therefore celebrated the Lord's 'kindness' (*chesed*).
 - Since the thank offering glorified the Lord publicly with its song of thanksgiving and so made him known, he preferred it to any other kind of sacrifice from an individual (see Ps 50:7-15, 23; 69:30-33).

3. The following psalms have been classified as individual thanksgivings.
 - Certain status: 18 (royal), 30, 32, 34 (acrostic psalm),

41, 92, 116, 118, 138 (royal), Is 38:10-20; Jonah 3:2-9

- Uncertain status: 9 (thanksgiving with petition), 23 (psalm of confidence), 31 (petition with thanksgiving), 40 (thanksgiving with petition), 111 (acrostic poem of thanksgiving and praise), 145 (acrostic thanksgiving and praise).

4. The main elements of the individual thanksgivings

- Performance of thanksgiving to the Lord (30:1; 116:16-19)
- Announcement of thanksgiving to the congregation (34:1-3; 116:1-2, 12-14)
- Retrospective narrative to the congregation (30:2-3, 8-12; 34:4, 6; 116:3-4, 6-11)
 - Account of trouble
 - Appeal to the Lord
 - Deliverance by the Lord
- Hymnic praise (30:4-6; 116:5,15)
- Teaching of the congregation (34:5,7-22)

Psalm 116

1. Text and Translation

- a. Yahweh is the implied object of "I love" in 1.
- b. *Beyōmi* in 2 means that the psalmist will call on the Lord all the days of his life.
- c. The idiom *Qārā'* means to 'invoke' the Lord's name by addressing him publicly in prayer as well as to 'proclaim' it by speaking about him publicly in thanksgiving or praise.
- d. The particle *'annāh* in 4 and 16 introduces a strong request, 'O' or 'Please'.
- e. *Merachēm* is used only here in 5 for God rather than the more usual form *rachūm*.
- f. The suffix *-eki* on 'your rest' in 7 is a 2fs Aramaic form.
- g. Verses 8-9 are almost identical with Ps 56:13.
- h. The 'lands/regions of life' in 9 are identical with 'the courts of the Lord' in 19; cf. Ps 27:13; 52:5; 56:13; 142:5.
- i. The LXX ends its Psalm 114 with 9 and begins its Psalm 115 with 10.
- j. In 12 *tagmūlōchi* is an Aramaic plural noun with an Aramaic 3ms suffix, 'his benefits'.
- k. The cup referred to in 13 is probably a bowl filled with wine which was offered to the Lord as a drink offering with the thanksgiving (cf. Num 15:10).
- l. The term *nēder* is used both for a vow and the votive offering that is vowed (see Lev 7:16-18; 27:1-27; Num 15:1-5)
- m. The phrase *negedāh-nā'* in 14 and 18 is usually construed as the preposition *neged* with an emphatic ending *-āh* followed by the emphatic particle *-nā'*. But this is unlikely for three reasons.
 - The particle *-nā'* is never used elsewhere with a preposition.
 - The preposition *neged* is never followed by *le-* elsewhere in the OT.
 - The *-āh* ending is inexplicable for *negedāh*.The most reasonable way to go is to repoint and emend the text as '*aggīdāh-nā'*, 'I must tell'.

- n. The word *hammāwetāh* in 15 is an anomalous feminine form *hammāweth*.
- o. We would expect *betōk* rather *betōkēki* than in 19. The same form occurs in Ps 135:9 and can be construed in one of two ways.
 - The 2fs Aramaic suffix, 'in your midst' (cf. 7)
 - The construct form of the noun *tōkēk*, 'the centre of'.

2. Genre

- Individual thanksgiving
- Hymnic fragment in 5-6^a
- Proverbial saying in 15

3. Literary Features

- Repetition
 - 'I will call on the name of the Lord' from 4^b in 13^b and 17^b
 - Verse 14 in 18
 - '*Annāh YHWH* from 4 in 16
 - The holy name *YHWH* in 1, 4 (2x), 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19
- The parallel between '*I have loved*' in 1 and '*I have believed*' in 10 and the parallel structure of 1-9 and 10-19
- The address of the Lord in 8 and 16-17
- Key words
 - 'Call' in 2, 4, 13, 17
 - 'Death' in 3, 8, 15
 - 'Soul/life in 4, 7, 8
 - 'Turn/return in 7, 12
 - 'Benefit' in 7, 14
 - 'Eye' in 8, 12
- The editorial addition of *hallelū-yāh* at the end of the psalm.

4. Structure

- Report of the rescue from death: 1-9
 - Declaration of love for the Lord (1-2)
 - Report of cry for help to him (3-4)
 - Report of deliverance with words of praise (5-6)
 - Decision to go to the temple as his place of rest (7-9)
- Payment of vows with a votive offering of thanks: 10-19
 - Declaration of confidence in the Lord (10-11)
 - Presentation of drink offering (12-14)
 - Act of submission to the Lord (15-16)
 - Presentation of thank offering to the Lord (17-19^a)
- Call to praise: 19^b

5. Exegesis

a. Report of the rescue from death: 1-9

- Declaration of love for the Lord (1-2)
 - The psalm begins unusually with a declaration of 'love' for the Lord (see Ps 31:23; 97:10; 122:6; 145:20; cf. 5:11; 69:36; 119:32), because he has heard and continues to hear the psalmist's 'petitions', ie pleas for 'grace' (see Ps 28:2,6; 31:22; 130:2; 140:6; 143:1).
 - Because the Lord has listened to him, he shows his love for the Lord by promising to call on him as long as he lives in a life of prayer and praise.
- Report of the cry for help (3-4)
 - Verses 3-4 summarise the psalmist's previous lament.
 - In the ancient world death was not conceived as a final state but as a sphere of power whose influence was already experienced in this life in infirmity and sickness, defeat and imprisonment, trouble and disaster, drought and famine (see the battle between Baal and Mot in Canaanite religion).
 - Death had entrapped the psalmist, like a hunter with an animal, and had tied him up with its 'ropes' (see Ps 18:4,5; 140:5; cf. Job 18:10).
 - He had therefore experienced for himself the 'pangs/pains' (see 118:5; cf. Lam 1:3) of those who entered the underworld, which are 'distress' and 'sorrow' (see Ps 13:2; 31:10; 107:34). These are a foretaste of death.
 - In his trouble he invoked the Lord by name and petitioned him for the 'deliverance' of his 'soul/life' (*nephesh*) from death.
- Report of deliverance with words of praise (5-6)
 - The psalmist introduces the report of his deliverance in 6b by the hymnic fragment in 5-6a, which acknowledges that he had been 'brought low' (see Ps 79:8; 142:6) by his 'silliness', 'his gullible stupidity' (see Ps 19:7; 119:30; cf. Pr 1:4,22; 7:7; 8:5; 9:4,6,16, etc), but the Lord had demonstrated his 'grace', 'righteousness' and 'compassion' to him.
 - The merciful God, praised as 'the bodyguard' (see Ps 34:20; 97:10; 121:3-4; 145:20; 146:9) of his silly, immature people, had saved him from death.
- Report of decision to return to the temple as his place of rest (7-9)
 - The temple was 'the resting place' for God and his ark (see Ps 132:8; cf. 1 Chr 6:31; 28:2; 2 Chr 6:41; Isa 66:1) where he gave 'rest' to his people (see Ps 95:11; cf. 1 Chr 23:25).
 - Its courts were 'the regions of life' where God's people could escape the grip of death and receive the gift of 'vitality' from the living God (see Ps 36:9; 133:3; cf. 42:2,8; 84:2) as a favour from him (see Ps 30:5). See M. L. Barre, "The Land of the Living," *JSOT* 41 (1988): 40-59.

- In 7-8 the psalmist reports his decision to 'return' to the temple (see Ps 22:27; 23:6; cf. 2 Chr 30:6-9) as the 'resting place' for his soul after its deliverance.
- Since the Lord had 'dealt so generously' with him (see Ps 13:6; 142:7), he felt moved to repay him for his 'generosity' (12).
- The confession to the Lord in 8 gives the reason for returning to the temple (7) and for walking before the Lord there (9). His 'soul', 'eyes' and 'feet' now belong to the Lord, since he has delivered them from death.
- Verse 9 can be taken in one of two ways - as part of the report in 7-9 of the decision to go to the temple, or as a declaration of commitment to the Lord's service at the temple.
- Like a servant who lived with his master and so was constantly at his beck and call (cf. 1 Sam 2:35; 12:2), the psalmist announces his readiness to serve the Lord by 'walking about in his presence' and 'going in and out' before him (see Gen 17:1; 24:40; 1 Sam 2:30; 2 Kgs 20:3; Ps 56:13).

b. Payment of vows at the temple in Jerusalem: 10-19

- Declaration of confidence in the Lord rather than humanity (10-11)
 - The declaration of confidence in 10-11 is the counterpart to the declaration of love in 1-2.
 - The faith of the psalmist has been confirmed by his trouble which led him to realise that no human beings could save him with their deceptive offers of help.
- The presentation of the drink offering as a votive offering (12-14)
 - The rhetoric question about the proper repayment for the Lord's generosity in 12 introduces the presentation of the **drink offering** in 13-14, the **act of submission** in 15-16, and **the act of thanksgiving** in 17-19.
 - In answer to that question he first addresses his guests as he announces the presentation of a bowl of wine as part of the votive offering to the Lord (Num 15:1-5).
 - As he lifted up the bowl he spoke the words in 13-14, by which he proclaimed the Lord's name publicly to the congregation in a toast to him (see Keel, 329-33).
 - Part of the wine was probably offered to the Lord by being poured out at the base of the altar, while the rest was drunk by him and his guests in the sacrificial banquet.
 - The container was called 'the bowl of salvation', because it was offered in thanksgiving to the Lord for his salvation of the psalmist; unlike the cup of the Lord's wrath and judgment in Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15,17,28, it brought blessing to those who drank of it (cf. Ps 23:5).
- The act of voluntary submission to the Lord (15-16)

- The psalmist quotes a proverbial saying with a strange twist in 15 about the Lord's attitude to his 'devotees' (*chasīdīm*), the beneficiaries of his 'loving kindness'.
 - ❖ We would expect a saying about the preciousness of their lives to the Lord (see 1 Sam 26:21; 2 Kgs 1:13-14).
 - ❖ Instead it claims that their death is 'precious' or 'costly'.
 - ❖ They are so valuable to the Lord that their deaths will 'cost' him more than he is prepared to pay.
 - ❖ Since they are so precious, he redeems their lives from death as he has the psalmist (cf. Ps 72:14).
- After the announcement of the drink offering, the psalmist dedicates himself to the Lord with the formula of submission and service in 16 (see Ps 119:125; 143:12; cf. 2 Sam 15:34; 2 Kgs 10:5) for three reasons.
 - ❖ He is precious to the Lord (15; cf. Isa 43:4).
 - ❖ Since he is the child of the Lord's devoted servant-woman, he belonged to the Lord as his child (see Ps 86:16), just as the child of a slave belonged to her master (cf. Exod 23:12).
 - ❖ Since the Lord had freed him from the 'fetters' (see Ps 2:3; 107:14) of death which had bound him (3-4,6), he now willingly dedicates his saved life to the Lord's service (note the reference to walking before the Lord in 9).
- The presentation of the thank offering (17-19)
 - In 17-19 we have the formula for the presentation of the male lamb or kid that was vowed as a thank offering to the Lord (see Lev 7:16-18; Ps 66:13-15; 107:22; cf. Jonah 2:10).
 - It was addressed to the Lord whose name was invoked in this song of thanksgiving.
 - It occurred in the presence of the congregation assembled in the temple courts at Jerusalem which was the proper place for the fulfilment of vows (see Deut 12:5-6, 11, 17-18, 26; Ps 65:1).
 - The psalm ends with a call to praise addressed to the congregation in 19b which incorporates the individual thanksgiving in the corporate praise of God's people. It makes this psalm part of the Egyptian Hallel that consists of 113-118 and was used at the three great pilgrim festivals.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- a. Ps 116:12-14, 17-19 is aptly used as an offertory for *The Service Without Communion* and *The Service - Alternative Form*.
- b. Parts are set as the reading from the psalms in the lectionary
 - Ps 116:1-9 for series A 5 Lent 5 with the story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11:47-53

- Ps 116:1,2,12-19 for series A Proper 6 with the story of the visit of the angels to Abraham in Gen 18:1-15.
- Ps 116:1-9 for series B 17 Proper 19 with Peter's confession of faith in Mark 8:27-35
- Ps 116:1, 2, 12-19 for Maundy Thursday series ABC with the institution of the Lord's Supper.

c. Parts of the psalm are quoted and alluded to in three places in the NT.

- 116:10 is quoted in 2 Cor 4:13 by Paul where he maintains that his preaching of God's grace depends on Christ's resurrection as the basis for the hope of resurrection to life in God's presence and is meant to lead people to thanksgiving and praise for his grace.
- Paul may allude to 116:11 in Rom 3:4 where he concedes that all humans are false in some way in contrast to God's faithfulness.
- Paul alludes to 116:13 in 1 Cor 10:16 where he calls the cup of the Lord's Supper 'the cup of blessing which we bless'.

d. This psalm gives us a basic theology of thanksgiving.

- We have been redeemed from death through Christ's death and resurrection and are called to share in his 'rest' (Matt 11:29; Heb 4:1-10).
- We owe our lives to him and belong to him as our Lord (Rom 6:11; 14:7-9; 1 Cor 6:19-20).
- Our love for him and commitment to him is expressed in our praise of him (Heb 13:15) and our 'thanksgiving' (*eucharistia*) for his 'grace' (*charis*) to us (1 Cor 4:13-15; Col 2:6; 3:16-17).

PSALM 118

1. Text and Translation

- a. The short form of the holy name *Yāh* in 5, used by the congregation in its cries of acclamation, is also found in 14, 17, 18, 19.
- b. The plural *be'ōzebāy* is a plural of intensity. The preposition *be* is used as a *beth essentiae*; it links a second noun with a preceding noun in order to specify the nature and character of the first noun.
- c. In 10, 11 and 12 *ki* is used as an emphatic particle.
- d. In 12 the LXX read *bā'rū*, 'they burned', rather than *dō'rū*, 'they were extinguished'.
- e. Since the form *dechīthani* in 13, 'you pushed me', does not make sense if addressed either to the Lord or the nations, it is best to follow the LXX and read it as a Niphal, *nidchīthī*, 'I was pushed hard' or 'I was hard-pressed'.
- f. The suffix *on'azzi* in 14 does double duty for *zimirāth* which has the old feminine ending and can be translated as either 'instrumental music' or 'vigor'.
- g. The Masoretic pointing after *qōl* in 15 indicates that it is to be construed as 'listen' rather than 'the sound of'.
- h. In the phrase *rinnāh wishū'āh* from 15 the *waw* is used explicatively like 'that is' in English. Here *yeshū'āh* is probably used in the sense of 'triumph'.
- i. The phrase *'āsāh chayil* in 15 is a military idiom for an act of great bravery which results in victory (see Num 24:18; 1 Sam 14:48; Ps 60:12).
- j. In 16 *rōmēmāh* is an anomalous feminine singular Polel participle for *merōmēmāh* from the verb *rūm*. By raising his right hand the victor in a battle asserted his superiority over his enemies and so triumphed over them.
- k. The use of the imperfect tenses in 17-18 is rather puzzling. The final perfect tense *nethānāni* probably signals that they refer to past acts with present significance.
- l. The shift from 'gates' in 19 to 'gate' in 20 arises from the existence of a large eastern gate into the sanctuary with double doors (see Ps 24:7, 9; 100:2).
- m. The *rōsh pinnāh* in 22 is either the capstone of an arch or, more likely at this period, a large foundation stone which stabilises two adjacent walls. It could

also be the stone used as the pinnacle of a tower. While *pinnāh* is normally used either for a corner or a corner tower in a city wall, the noun is also used metaphorically in Jud 20:2; 1 Sam 14:38 and Isa 19:13 for a leader.

- n. The verb *‘āsāh* can be construed in 24 either as 'he has made' or 'he has acted', while *bō* can refer either to the Lord or the day.
- o. The phrase *habbā’* is probably meant to refer to the king or person who ‘enters’ the sanctuary with the Lord's name on his lips in the song of praise (see 19). The Masoretic accentuation, however, connects it with *bārūk*: 'The one who enters is blessed by the Lord's name'.
- p. There are problems with the translation of three words in 27b.
 - This verb *‘āsar* normally means 'tie up', but it is also used figuratively in 1 Kgs 20:14 and 2 Chron 13:3 for 'engaging' in battle.
 - *Chag* is the term for the three pilgrim festivals, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles in which representatives from every Jewish family came in pilgrimage to the temple. Here it can also be used for the procession of people into the sanctuary at a festival and, as here, a victory procession into the temple. Some scholars argue that it is used for a festival offering here as in Exod 23:18.
 - While *‘abōth* means 'rope', *‘ābōth* is also used, as here, for leafy branches of trees or a palm tree (see Lev 23:40; Neh 8:15; Ezek 6:13; 19:11; 20:28).
 - Since this psalm was used on the Feast of Tabernacles, the line is best understood as a reference to the procession of the people with lulab branches around the altar at the festival (Lev 23:40; Neh 8:15).

2. Genre: National Thanksgiving

- a. This psalm may have been used in its original form by the king with the choir after victory in battle (see 2 Chron 20:27-28), but was then, like 105, 106, 107 and 136, used regularly as a hymn in festive worship for thanksgiving and petition for deliverance.
- b. Its present form reflects its use on the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles for the procession of the choir and congregation around the altar with lulab branches (see especially 26-27).
- c. By the time of Christ it formed the climax of psalms 113-118, the Egyptian Hallel, which was used on the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles and the Dedication of the Temple, and was regarded as a Messianic psalm.
- d. It contains elements from other genres
 - The thanksgiving refrain in 1-4 and 29.
 - Individual thanksgiving in 5-7, 10-13, 17-18, 21.

- 'Better' saying from the wisdom schools in 8-9.
- Cry of triumph after battle in 15-16.
- Entrance liturgy in 19-20 (cf. Ps 15, 24).
- Proverbial saying in 22.
- Hymnic elements in 14 (see Exod 15:2; Isa 12:2), 23-26,27a,28)

3. Literary Features

- The use in *inclusio*
 - The thanksgiving refrain in 1 and 29
 - 'Thanks' in 1 and 19 as well as in 21 and 28
- The use of 'answer' in 5 and 21 and 'victory for me' in 14 and 21 to introduce new sections of the song.
- The repetition of words and phrases in consecutive lines which connects verses like links in a chain.
 - 'Truly his generosity is for ever' in 1, 2, 3, 4
 - 'Let them say' in 3, 4
 - 'YHWH for me' in 6, 7
 - 'It is better to take refuge in YHWH' in 8, 9
 - 'They surrounded me' in 10, 11, 12
 - 'In the name of YHWH I cut them off' in 10, 11, 12
 - 'Victory' in 14, 15
 - 'Do/act' in 15, 16
 - 'Die' in 15, 16, 17
 - 'Gate' in 17, 18
 - 'Enter' and 'righteous' in 19, 20
 - 'Be/become' in 21, 22, 23.
- Verses 19-28 as a responsive dialogue between the King and the priest as the gate keeper to the sanctuary
- The use of the holy name 22 times and its shortened form 5 times

4. Structure

- a. Call to congregational thanksgiving by the choir: 1-4
- b. Report of reliance on the Lord in battle by the king at the temple: 5-13
 - Summary report of Lord's answer to prayer (5)
 - Confession of confidence in the Lord (6-9)
 - The use of the Lord's name in battle (10-12)
 - Report of the Lord's help in the face of defeat (13)
- c. Report of triumph in battle by the king/leader at the temple: 14-18
 - Praise of the Lord as the victor in battle (14)

- Report of the Lord's victory by the righteous (15-16)
 - Report of king's survival and the Lord's discipline of him (17-18)
- d. Dialogue between king and the priest before entry into the temple: 19-28
- Request for permission to enter the temple for thanksgiving (19)
 - Permission for entry by the priest as the gatekeeper (20)
 - Thanksgiving by the king for deliverance (21)
 - Instruction by priest with proverb on the rejected stone (22)
 - Confession by king and people: victory is the Lord's deed (23)
 - Call by the priest to rejoice in the Lord's day of triumph (24)
 - Petition of the king and the people for victory and success (25)
 - Blessing of king and people by the priest (26)
 - Confession by the king and the people of God as their light (27^a)
 - Permission by priest for the procession to approach the altar (27^b)
 - Thanksgiving by king as the leader (28)
- e. Final call to thanksgiving: 29

5. Exegesis

a. The call to thanksgiving: 1-4

- (1) The psalm begins with the call to praise by the choir.
- The verb *hōdāh* not only conveys the notion of thanking but also confessing and praising the Lord.
 - The call takes the form of the thanksgiving refrain which, according to Chronicles (1 Chr 16:8, 34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3) was a regular part of the liturgy at the temple.
 - It consisted of two parts: a call to praise and its content which was also the reason for praise.
 - By it the choir proclaimed the Lord's goodness and eternal loving-kindness to the people at the temple.
 - The congregation was therefore called to acknowledge the Lord as the giver of these gifts.
- (2) Three groups of people were called to join the choir in their praise (see Ps 115:9-11; 135:19-20)
- The whole of Israel as potential beneficiaries of his goodness and loving-kindness
 - The priests as administrators of his goodness and loving-kindness
 - The worshippers at the temple as the recipients of his goodness and loving-kindness

b. Report by the king about his reliance on the Lord: 5-13

- (1) After the call to praise, the king or the leader of the choir as his representative tells of his deliverance by the Lord.
- (2) First, he summarises his experience (5).
 - When he called on the Lord, he 'answered' his cry (cf. 21).
 - The Lord brought him out of his 'narrow place' with no room to move to a 'spacious place' with freedom to move (see Ps 18:19; 31:8).
- (3) Secondly, he reports his confidence in the Lord before the battle (6-9).
 - He was sure that the Lord was with him as his 'helper', his ally in battle.
 - As a result he was not afraid of any human enemy but was convinced that he would 'look' with triumph on his enemies (see Ps 34:9; 92:12).
 - That conviction was reinforced by a proverbial saying on the value of relying on the Lord rather than on human allies (see Ps 146:3-4; cf. 20:7; 33:16-19; 62:8-10).
 - A person took 'refuge' in the Lord by praying to him with a lament (see Ps 5:11; 11:1; 17:7, etc.).
- (4) Thirdly, he reports his use of the Lord's name to defend himself against his enemies.
 - All the nations attacked him like a swarm of bees.
 - They 'surrounded' him in battle and 'pushed him hard' on all sides (see Ps 35:5; 140:5), so that, like a wall, he was about to fall down (see Ps 62:4).
 - He called on the Lord's name in prayer (see Ps 20:1, 5, 7; 2 Chr 14:9-12) and as a battle cry (see 1 Sam 17:45; 2 Chr 13:13-15) to 'ward off' the repeated attacks.
 - His confidence in the Lord's 'help' (7) was therefore confirmed by his 'extinction' of his enemies like a fire in a thicket of thorns.

c. The report by the king of his triumph in battle: 14-19

- (1) The king introduces his report with a verse taken from the victory hymn of Israel in Exodus 15:2 (see Isa 12:2).
 - It announces that he has received 'strength' and 'vigour' (or the reason for his music) from the Lord.
 - Since the Lord has helped him gain the victory, the triumph belongs to the Lord rather than the king and his people.
 - He therefore identifies himself with Israel and compares his victory with Israel's victory over the Egyptians.

- (2) After the verse from the hymn at the sea, he reports the song of triumph in 15-16 sung by his army after the battle (see Exod 15:6).
- They are called the 'righteous', because they have been 'vindicated' by the Lord in battle.
 - They celebrate the Lord with acclamation as their hero whose 'right hand' has won the victory for them (see Ps 17:7; 20:6; 44:3; 60:5; 77:10; 98:1; 138:7).
- (3) The report of the king culminates in 17-18 with his explanation for the purpose of his deliverance.
- Like a teacher who disciplines a student, the Lord had used the nations to 'teach' him a hard lesson about the need for reliance on the Lord.
 - The Lord had saved him from certain death, so that he could tell others of the Lord's goodness and loving-kindness to him in a song of thanksgiving.

d. Dialogue between the victorious king and the priest who guarded the gate before entry into the sanctuary for thanksgiving: 19-28

- (1) Request by the king for permission to enter the sanctuary: 19
- Since the Lord has saved him from death he now wants to thank the Lord for giving him the victory.
 - He therefore requests permission from the gatekeepers to enter the sanctuary to present his song of thanksgiving to the Lord, together with the choir and the whole congregation.
- (2) Terms for entry given by the gatekeeper (20)
- Just as guards were stationed at the entrance to the palace to protect the king and to admit the right people into the palace (cf 2 Chr 12:10), so three priests were in charge of the main gate to the inner sanctuary (see 2 Kgs 12:9; 22:4; 23:4; 25:18; 1 Chr 9:19; Jer 52:24). They allowed only those who were ritually clean and righteous to approach the altar (see 2 Chr 23:19).
 - The gate was called 'the Lord's Gate', because it admitted people into his presence.
 - The gatekeeper here asserts that only those who were righteous could enter the sanctuary (see Ps 5:4-7; 15; 24:3-6; Jer 7:5-10).
- (3) The king's response: thanksgiving for victory (21)
- The king responds to the demand of the gatekeeper rather strangely by engaging in an act of thanksgiving to the Lord for answering his prayer and granting him the victory.

- By his thanksgiving he gives his credentials for entry and demonstrates that he and his people are righteous.
 - Since the Lord 'answers' the prayers of the righteous (see Ps 34:15, 17; Pr 15:8,29), the Lord's answer to his prayer proves that he is righteous (see Ps 66:18-20).
 - The Lord therefore vindicated and justified him by giving him the victory in battle (see Ps 37:39-40; cf. the use of the term: 'righteous' for the victors in 118:15).
 - His thanksgiving therefore shows that he is righteous and so allowed into the sanctuary.
- (4) Instruction by the gatekeeper to the congregation in response to the king's thanksgiving (22)
- The gatekeeper responds to the king's thanksgiving with a proverb about a stone which compares the Lord's treatment of the king with the king's maltreatment by others.
 - The king is compared to a stone which had been rejected as useless by some builders but which had eventually become the key stone in a new building.
 - Although rejected by the nations, he has triumphed over them and has become 'the head' of the congregation (see 1 Chr 16:7; 2 Chr 20:27) and the nations (see Ps 18:43; Isa 55:4).
 - As the victorious king he leads them in thanksgiving.
 - The congregation therefore is envisaged as a building or a tower with the king as the foundation stone or capstone.
- (5) Acknowledgement by the king of the victory as God's doing (23)
- The king reacts to the proverb by acknowledging God as the miraculous 'builder'.
 - By giving him the victory God has made him the head of the congregation, its leader in praise.
- (6) Call to rejoice by the priest (24)
- Since the Lord 'acted' for them on their day of victory, he has created this day of celebration for them (see the teaching of the Lord's Day in the NT).
 - Since they stand in the Lord's presence, the king and the people are invited to join with the priests in rejoicing in the Lord.
- (7) Prayers by the king as the head of the congregation (25)
- For future deliverance and victory over their enemies (see Ps 12:1; 20:9; 28:9; 60:5; cf. 106:47)
 - For their prosperity as a nation (see Ps 1:3)
- (8) The priest then addresses the king and the procession (26).

- They acknowledge that the king who has invoked the Lord's name in thanksgiving and has entered the sanctuary, has been 'blessed' by the Lord and is therefore a man of blessing (see Ps 21:3,6; 72:17; note that only here and 2:12 is any human called 'blessed' in the Psalter).
- Since the priests have been commissioned to bless the people (see Num 6:22-27; Deut 10:9; 21:5; 1 Chr 23:13; 2 Chr 30:27), and since they stand in the Lord's house which the Lord has established as a place of blessing (see Ps 133:3), they bless the king and the people as they enter and so pass on the Lord's blessing to them (see Ps 115:12b-15; 134:3).

(9) The king responds with a twofold confession of faith (27^a)

- Yahweh is God.
- He has revealed the light of his presence (Ps 89:5) to them by rescuing them and defeating their enemies (see Ps 27:1; 31:16; 37:6; 44:3; 80:3,19).

(10) The priests then allow the king and the people to go in procession to the altar (27^b).

- The goal of the procession was the altar with horns on each corner for the altar was the place where the Lord met with his people (see Exod 29:42-43).
- They carry palm branches as symbols of victory and touch the altar with them to acknowledge God as the victor and receive blessing from him.
- This reflects what happened on the Feast of Tabernacles when the people took up branches of palms, myrtles, willows and citrons daily in procession up to, or around the altar (Lev 23:40).
- According to the Mishnah, this psalm was later used at the Feast of Tabernacles and the people waved their branches towards the altar at the singing of verses 1, 25 and 29.

(11) The thanksgiving of the king as the head of the congregation (28).

- In words which echo the victory hymn of Israel at the Red Sea (see Exod 15:3) the king acknowledges the Lord as his own God with a special concern for him.
- He therefore thanks and 'magnifies' (see Ps 30:1; 34:3; 66:17; 107:32; 145:1) him.

e. The psalm ends as it began with the thanksgiving refrain 29 that links this act of thanksgiving with the regular praises of Israel and calls on the congregation to give thanks to the Lord.

6. The Reading and Application of Psalm 118

- a. First political level: its use after victory in battle
 - Thanksgiving by king and people for God's victory over their enemies
 - Prayer for future deliverance and acclamation of king as the bearer of God's blessing

- b. Second liturgical level: its use at the Feast of Tabernacles before the exile
 - Annual thanksgiving by king and people for God's victory over the life-threatening chaotic powers
 - Prayer for God's blessing in the new year and acclamation of king as the bearer of God's blessing

- c. Third Messianic level: its canonical prophetic use in the post-exilic period as part of the Egyptian Hallel (113-118) on the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles
 - Thanksgiving by Israel for God's past victories over their enemies
 - Prayer for their future deliverance by the Messiah who would come/enter to them in the Lord's name as the victorious bearer of blessing from God (see Zech 9:9-10)

- d. Fourth historical level: its use by the crowd (Matt 21:8-9; Mark 11:8-11; John 12:12-13) or his disciples (Luke 19:37-38; see also 13:35) on Palm Sunday to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem
 - Thanksgiving to God for the Messianic work of Jesus and acclamation of him as the Messiah
 - Prayer for salvation from their enemies by Jesus and announcement of his victory over them

- e. Fifth Christological level: its use by Jesus and his apostles
 - Proclamation of himself as the Coming One (Matt 11:2-6; 23:39; Luke 7:20-23; 13:35) and the rejected Messiah (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17)
 - Proclamation of Jesus by the apostles as the foundation of the church as God's new temple (Acts 4:11; 1 Cor 3:10-12; Eph 2:20-21; 1 Pet 2:7)

- f. Sixth sacramental level: its liturgical use in the church
 - Thanksgiving to God the Father in the Eucharist for Christ's victory over Satan and all evil powers (Psalm for Easter Sunday)
 - Acclamation of Jesus as the victor who comes to his people in the Eucharist as the giver of heavenly blessings

- g. Seventh devotional level: its personal use in the church
 - Thanksgiving to God by Christians for their deliverance from death together with Christ (cf. 1 Pet 2:9)
 - Prayer for final victory over all spiritual enemies at the resurrection (Matt 23:39)

7. Liturgical and Theological Use

- a. The cry of Hosanna from 118:25 and the acclamation of the king in 118:26^a is used as part of the Sanctus in the Service with Communion.
 - In the post-exilic period this psalm was re-interpreted Messianically.
 - Under the influence of 26a the Messiah was often referred to as 'the Coming One' (Gk. *ho erchomenos*; see Matt 11:3; Luke 7:20).
 - When the crowds greeted Jesus with these verses at his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, they acclaimed him quite explicitly as the promised Messianic King (see Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13; cf. also Matt 23:39 and Luke 13:35 where Jesus says that only those who say this verse will 'see' him again).
 - We therefore join with the faithful people of Israel by using these verses to greet the advent of our king to us in the sacrament.

- b. Psalm 118:1-2, 15-24 is set to be read on Easter Sunday to describe what Jesus has achieved for us by his death and resurrection.

- c. The proverb about the rejected stone in 22 is mentioned frequently in the NT.
 - Jesus quotes it in Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10, and Luke 20:17 and uses it to explain his rejection by the leaders of Israel.
 - Peter uses it in Acts 4:11 to preach salvation in the name of Jesus and in 1 Pet 2:7 to teach about Jesus as the cornerstone of God's new temple who is also the stumbling stone for unbelievers.
 - Paul alludes to it with his reference to Jesus as the foundation stone of the church in 1 Cor 3:10-12 and Eph 2:20-21.

- d. In the Jewish tradition, Psalm 118 is the climax of the Egyptian Hallel, psalms 113-118.
 - It was originally sung on each of the seven days of Tabernacles.
 - Then it was also used for the Feasts of Passover (see Matt 26:30), Pentecost, and the Dedication of the Temple (Hanukkah).
 - The actual climax of the Hallel was the petition: *Hoshianna* in 118:25.
 - Under the influence of Aramaic the petition for victory eventually became Hosanna: an acclamation addressed to the Lord as the victorious king.
 - The use of this acclamation by the crowds to address Jesus rather than God led to his rejection by the chief priests and teachers (see Matt 21:9, 15; cf. Mark 11:9; John 12:13).

- e. This psalm was Luther's favourite in the psalter.
 - He adopted 118:17 as his motto.
 - He wrote his famous commentary on it at Coburg Castle during the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 (see LW 14, pp 41-106).

- f. Note the excellent hymn by Isaac Watts on 24-26 found in 502 ALH: 'This is the day the Lord hath made'.

PSALM 23

1. Text and Translation

- a. The term 'my shepherd' in 1 is without parallel in the OT. While the Lord is addressed as Israel's shepherd in Ps 80:2, he is more often described as a shepherd who 'gathers' (Isa 40:11; 49:9,10; Mic 2:12; 4:6-8 etc.), 'leads' (Ps 77:2; 78:22) and 'shepherds' (Ps 82:9; Gen 48:15; Hos 4:16; Mic 7:14) his 'flock' (Ps 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; Jer 13:7; 23:1) rather than an individual person. In the ancient orient kings (2 Sam 24:17; Isa 44:28) and the leaders of a nation (Isa 56:11; Jer 2:8; 3:15; 6:3 etc) were commonly called shepherds, since they were to protect and provide for their people.
- b. *Ne'ōth* in 2 is the construct plural of *nāvāh*. It is used both for animal pasturage and for a human place of residence.
- c. The opposite of the 'peaceful waters' in 2 are the raging waters of chaos (Ps 18:16; 29:3; 33:7; 69:1-2,14-15; 77:16,19; 93:4; 124:4-5; 144:7). Whereas the land was Israel's *menūchāh* 'place of rest' (Deut 12:9), the temple was chosen by the Lord as his 'resting place' (Ps 132:8,14; Isa 66:1; 1 Chron 28:2), the place where Israel could rest with God (Ps 95:11; 116:7).
- d. *Nāhal* in 2 is a virtual synonym of *nāchāh* in 3. Whereas *nāhal* means to 'help along' a weak or handicapped person or animal (Ps 31:3; cf Gen 44:17; Exod 15:13; 2 Chron 28:15; 32:22; Isa 40:11; 49:10), *nāchāh* is a more general word for leading by going out in front (Ps 5:8; 27:11; 77:20; 139:24; cf. Gen 24:27; Exod 13:17; 15:13; Isa 58:11).
- e. The phrase *naphshī yeshōshēb* in 3 belongs to 2b metrically. While it is usually translated 'he restores my soul', the use of the Polel with image of the sheep in Jer 50:19 indicates that it could also be translated 'he brings me back' or 'he gathers me' (Ezek 38:8; 39:27).
- f. The phrase *ma'gelē tzedeq* in 3 means both 'right paths' and 'paths in which the Lord's righteousness is experienced'.
- g. While *shēbet* in 4 is the club used to protect the sheep from wild animals, the *mish'ebeth* is the shepherd's crook used to prod, steer and rescue the sheep.
- h. While *nicham* in the Piel usually means to comfort a person by expressing condolence to a bereaved person or by doing something to rectify their sense of loss, it is used in 4 for giving a person a sense of security and encouragement in the face of his own death.

- i. While *dishshēn* usually means 'to make fat' (Prov 11:25; 13:4; 15:30; 28:25), it is used in 5 for the 'anointing' of a person's head with 'olive oil' (Ps 55:21; 92:10; 104:15) or, more likely, with 'perfumed olive oil' (Ps 45:7; 89:20; 133:2).
- j. The literal sense of *kōsi rewāyāh* is 'my cup is an overflow'.
- k. While the MT points *weshabti* 'and I will return', the LXX rightly construes it as a *waw* with an infinite construct of *yāshab* and a first common singular suffix 'and my dwelling'.

2. Genre: Individual Psalm of Trust

- a. It resembles the confessions of confidence found in some individual laments (Ps 22:3-5, 9-10).
- b. While this psalm has some features of an individual thanksgiving, it reports the lifelong experience of the psalmist rather than a specific act of divine deliverance.
- c. While it could originally have been used either by a king who dwelt with the Lord on the temple mountain (Ps 61:4-7) or by a Levite whose livelihood did not depend on the possession of land but on his membership of the temple clergy (1 Chron 9:27,33; see also Ps 16:5-6; 84:4), it seems to be used canonically for each Israelite as a member of the Lord's household and a citizen of the temple community with the right of residence and the privilege of access to the Lord in the temple.

3. Literary Features

- The inclusio formed by *YHWH* in 1 and 6
- The progression from the shepherd/sheep imagery in 1-4 to the host/guest imagery in 5 which culminates in the non-figurative language in 6 as well as the journey from 'green pastures' to 'restful waters' to 'death valley' to 'the lord's house'
- The shift from speaking about the Lord in 1-3 and 6 to direct address of him in 4-5
- The use of contrasts in the psalm.
 - 'My shepherd' in 1 v 'my enemies' in 5
 - 'Lead' in 3 v 'pursue' in 5
 - 'Walk' in 4 v 'dwell' in 6
 - 'Evil/disaster' in 4 v 'goodness' in 6
 - 'Death' in 4 v 'life' in 6
- The use of lcs suffixes twelve times which reinforces the personal nature of the psalm

- The use of 3 x 2 metre in all bicolons except in 1b and 2a and 4b-d which forms a concluding tricolon with 2 x 2 x 2
- Division by syntax into five units
 - 1b-2a with a circumstantial noun clause before the main negative clause followed by an explanatory disjunctive appositional clause
 - 2b-3 with two further disjunctive appositional clauses after 2a and before the main clause in 3b (note the parallel between *nāhal* in 2 and *nāchāh* in 3)
 - 4 with a subordinate concessive clause in 4a before the main negative clause in 4b followed by a subordinate final clause in 4c which is elaborated by a disjunctive appositional clause in 4d
 - 5 with two appositional clauses
 - 6 with a disjunctive clause followed by a *waw* with an infinitive construct clause

4. Structure

- a. The Lord as Shepherd: 1-4
 - His ample provision (1b-2a)
 - His guidance in the right way (2b-3)
 - The psalmist's fearlessness in the face of death (4)
- b. The Lord as Host: 5-6
 - His protective hospitality (5a)
 - His generosity as a host (5b)
 - The constant enjoyment of the Lord's goodness in his house (6)

5. Exegesis

- a. The Lord as Shepherd: 1-4
 - (1) The psalm begins with a confession of faith in the Lord as the psalmist's shepherd (1b-2a).
 - The Lord is the shepherd-king who provides for the psalmist so well that he 'lacks' nothing (see Ps 34:10; note Deut 2:6; and 8:9 with their reference to Israel in the wilderness).
 - The Lord provides a place of plenty for him to live, like the shepherd who finds rich pasturage for his sheep (Song of Songs 1:7; Isa 13:20; Jer 33:12; Ezek 34:14, 15).
 - The green pastures may symbolise the land of Israel (Ps 83:12; Lam 2:2; Ezek 34:14).
 - (2) As shepherd the Lord leads him on a journey to a place of rest (2b-3).
 - The Lord 'helps him along' by waters which are 'restful' rather than dangerous, and brings him back when he strays from these life-

giving waters (see Ps 36:8-9 for the temple as the site of the fountain of life).

- By leading him on 'right paths', like a shepherd going out in front of his sheep, the Lord sets his life in order, so that things turn out right for him.
- He does this for 'his name's sake' (Ps 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11; see also 1 Kgs 8:41; Isa 48:9; Jer 14:7,21; Ezek 20:9,14,22,44; 36:22), to confirm the revelation of himself in Exodus 34:6-7 and to make himself known to the psalmist and through him to others.

(3) As his shepherd the Lord travels like a bodyguard with him even in the worst parts of his life-journey.

- The 'valley of the shadow of death' is not just a dark and dangerous place, like the wilderness on the journey from Egypt (Jer 2:6), but leads to the underworld, the land of the dead and realm of chaos which is untouched by order-creating, life-sustaining light (Ps 44:19; Job 3:5; 10:21-22; 12:22; 27:17; 34:22; 38:17; Jer 13:16).
- The Lord does not spare him the journey through the dark valley of death but travels 'with him' through it, protecting, guiding and comforting him. His presence makes the difference for the psalmist.
- The psalmist therefore does not fear evil and disaster as he passes through this valley, because the Lord is with him as he was with the patriarchs (Gen 26:3,24; 28:15; 31:3) and with Israel in their occupation of the land (Deut 20:1,4; 31:6,8).

b. The Lord as Host: 5-6

(1) In 5 the psalmist addresses the Lord as his host and elaborates the images of food and drink from 2.

- Like a king with his courtiers (1 Sam 20:5,4-9; 2 Sam 9:7-10; 1 Kgs 2:7; 4:27; 2 Kgs 25:29), the Lord prepares a royal banquet for the psalmist with food for his sustenance (Ps 78:19-20; a Is 21:5; Ezek 23:41; Prov 9:2).
- As a member of the Lord's household the psalmist's presence at the Lord's table demonstrates his privileged status to his enemies and so provides protection from them (2 Kgs 25:27-30).
- In fact, the Lord has singled him out for special attention and favour by anointing him with costly perfume (Eccl 9:8; Amos 6:6) as a favoured guest and by keeping his cup full with wine (Ps 16:5).
- The psalmist therefore enjoys the Lord's generous hospitality.

- The temple-altar is called the Lord's table in Ezek 44:16 and Mal 1:7,12, from which the priests received bread, oil and wine (see Num 18:12).
- (2) In 6 the psalmist both draws the conclusion from his meditation on the Lord as his shepherd/host and interprets the imagery in 1-5.
- The 'journey' of the psalm which began in 'the pastures rich with grass', proceeded by 'tranquil waters' and passed through 'death valley' ends up in the 'Lord's house' (Ps 5:7; 26:8; 27:4; 30:1; 36:8; 42:4; 52:8; 55:14; 65:4; 66:13 etc).
 - The psalmist will not just be an occasional visitor and guest at the Lord's table but a permanent resident in the Lord's household for the full extent of his life (Ps 27:4; 61:4-7; 65:4; 84:4; see also 52:8; 92:12-13).
 - This does not refer to his constant presence at the temple, but to his status as a member of the Lord's household with the right of access to him, the privilege of table fellowship with him, and the assurance of protection by his holiness.
 - In the temple the Lord bestowed his 'goodness' (Ps 34:8-10; 65:4; 84:11) and 'kindness' (Ps 36:7-10; 48:9; 52:8; 63:3) as announced regularly by refrain sung by the Levitical choir (Ps 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1-4, 29; 136; see also 1 Chron 16:34; 2 Chron 5:13; 7:3).
 - Since the psalmist is a member of the Lord's household, he will not be 'pursued' by his enemies but, in a striking inversion of the normal idiom, will be pursued by the Lord's goodness and kindness throughout his life, so that he will never lack anything good.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- a. This psalm is set to be read
- Series ABC on the Sunday of the Good Shepherd 4 Easter with John 10:1-10, 11-18, 22-30
 - Series A Proper 23 with the parable of the marriage feast in Matt 22:1-10
 - Series B Proper 11 with the feeding of the 5,000 whom Jesus fed because they were like sheep without a shepherd in Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
- b. Ezekiel 34 is probably an extended prophetic meditation on this psalm.
- c. This psalm is alluded to in the NT.
- In Mark 6:30-44 where Jesus is depicted as the shepherd who feeds 5,000 in the wilderness with five loaves and two fish
 - In Luke 15:4-7 where Jesus is the shepherd who searches for and

finds the lost sheep

- In John 10:1-18,25-30 where Jesus is the good shepherd who protects his sheep and gives them eternal life by laying down his life for them
- In Heb 13:20 where God is said to have raised Jesus from the dead to be the great shepherd who equips his sheep with everything good.
- In 1 Pet 2:25 and 5:4 where Jesus is confessed as the chief shepherd and bishop of God's flock
- In Rev 7:17 where Jesus the lamb is the shepherd of the saints in the heavenly sanctuary who leads them to springs of living water.

d. This is the best-known and most loved of all the psalms.

- It voices the experience of all believers as they journey through this life to their heavenly home.
- It has sustained many people on their death beds and is often used at funerals.
- It expresses the significance of the Lord's Supper where we are guests at his 'table' (1 Cor 10:21).

e. It is the basis for hymns 184, 387, 391 and 604.

f. Application

- Historical
 - Journey of Israel through the wilderness to Canaan
 - Journey of Israelites to temple in Jerusalem
- Liturgical: journey of faithful to heavenly sanctuary in Eucharistic liturgy
- Eschatological: journey of church to heavenly home
- Personal: journey of person through life back to God

PSALMS: CORPORATE PRAYER AND PRAISE

PSALM 90

1. Text and Translation

- a. In 1 the LXX reads *mā'ōz*, 'refuge', instead of *mā'ōn*, 'lair', 'safe place'.
- b. In 2 the LXX points the verb as a Hophal 'were brought forth' and construes 'the earth and the world' as its subject.
- c. In 5 *shēnāh* is best taken with *zeraṁtām* as a dative of means ('you overwhelm them with sleep'). The Masoretic punctuation should then be disregarded and *yihyū* should be linked with the second part of the verse ('they come to be in the morning').
- d. *Kī* is best taken as an emphatic particle in 4, 9 and 10.
- e. *Bāhem* in v.10 refers to 'all our days' in 9.
- f. I follow the LXX in reading *werochbām*, 'their extent' in 10 rather than the MT with *werohbām*, 'their busyness'.
- g. The subject of *rochbām* in 10 is *yemē*, 'the days of'.
- h. In 11 *yōdē'a* has both 'appekā, 'your wrath' and 'ebrāthekā, 'your fury' as its objects.
- i. The suffix on *yir'āthekā* in 11 is objective, ie 'respecting you' rather than 'your respect'.
- j. The simple waw at the beginning of 17 indicates that 17a is the purpose or result of 16.

2. Genre

A national lament (cf. Ps. 44; 74; 79; 80; 83) for a fast day (cf. Joel; 2 Chron 20:1-19) with some changes under the influence of the wisdom tradition.

- The use of hymnic material in 90:1-2,4 for reflection rather than complaint (cf. 44:1-8; 74:12-17; 80:1-2)
- The change from lament at a national catastrophe (eg. war in 79) to lament at the condition of fallen humanity
- The change from confession of sins and plea for forgiveness (eg. 79:8-9) to acknowledgment of judgment for sin in 7-9)

- The change from the vow of thanksgiving at the temple (eg. 79:13; 80:18) to the petition for lifelong rejoicing as the consequence of God's intervention

3. Literary Features

- The punning on *shūb* in 3 and 13
 - God 'returns' humans to dust
 - He calls them to 'return'.
 - ❖ To die (Gen 3:19; Ps 9:18; 104:29; 146:4)
 - ❖ To repent (Ps 51:15)
 - ❖ To return to him (Eccl 12:7)
 - The psalmist calls on God to 'return', to 'turn' from his anger (cf. Exod 32:12; Deut 13:17; Josh 7:26; 2 Kgs 23:26; Jon 3:9) and show a gracious face once more (cf. Gen 18:10,14; 2 Chron 30:6; Ps 6:5; 80:15; Isa 63:17; Joel 2:14; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7).
- Use of '*adōnāy*' as an inclusio in 1^b and 17
- Use of numerous keywords
 - 'Day/days' in 4,9,10,12,14,15
 - 'Year/years' in 4,9,10,15
 - 'Morning' in 5,6,14
 - 'Wrath' in 7,11
 - 'Fury' in 9,11
 - 'Your servants' in 13,16
 - 'Finish' in 7,9
 - 'Vanish' in 5,6
- Use of repeated words in enveloping verses to bracket off parts of the psalm
 - 8 by 7 and 9 ('finish')
 - 10 by 9 and 11 ('fury')
 - 11 by 10 and 12 ('days')
 - 13-14 by 12 and 15 ('days')
 - 14-15 by 13 and 16-17 ('your servants')
- The use of catch words to link verses
 - 'You' for 1 and 2
 - 'Morning' and 'vanish' for 5 and 6
 - 'Know/make known' for 11 and 12
 - 'Rejoice' and 'days' for 14 and 15
 - 'See/be seen' for 15 and 16

4. Structure

- a. Heading: 1a
- b. Acknowledgment of the eternal Lord as Israel's enduring refuge: 1^b-2

- c. Reflection on God's curtailment of human life: 3-6
 - God's conversion of humans back into dust (3)
 - God's evaluation of human time (4)
 - God's arrangement of human transience (5)
- d. Complaint at Israel's experience of God's wrath: 7-11
 - Their destruction by God's wrath (7)
 - God's exposure of their sin (8)
 - The passing of their days under God's wrath (9)
 - The resultant life-long experience of trouble (10)
 - Their ignorance of God's wrath and their religious duties (11)
- e. Israel's petitions for God's grace in the face of his wrath: 12-17
 - Instruction by God on self-evaluation for the getting of wisdom (12)
 - Conversion of God in his treatment of them (13)
 - God's satisfaction of them with his gladdening kindness (14)
 - God's gift of joy to fill their whole life cycle with rejoicing (15)
 - Revelation of God's hidden work to them and the resultant glorification of their children (16)
 - Consolidation by God of their work (17)

5. Exegesis

- a. Heading: 1^a
 - Ascription to Moses who had 'a spirit of wisdom' (Deut. 34:9)
 - Recollection of the intercession by Moses for Israel's survival at Mt Sinai in Exod 32-34 (see especially 32:11-13)
 - Psalm 90 as the intercession of Moses to ensure Israel's survival in answer to the failure of the monarchy as expressed in Psalm 89 and an introduction to the last two books of the psalter which praise God's mercy and rejoice in it as the basis for Israel's future
- b. Acknowledgment of the Lord as Israel's safe place: 1^b-2
 - The psalmist invokes God as the 'lord' and 'master' of the world.
 - The earth is the 'mother' of the enduring mountains (cf. Gen 1:20, 24; Job 38:8).
 - God is the 'mother' of the world and the land suitable for human habitation (cf. Pr 8:24-26).
 - He therefore transcends and rules human time ('generation to generation') and world history ('from age to age').

- The psalmist acknowledges God as Israel's eternal 'dwelling place/safe place'.
 - Heaven is God's *mā'ōn* (Deut 26:15; Jer 25:30; 2 Chron 30:23; cf. Zech 2:13; Ps 68:6).
 - Yet, since he also uses the temple as his earthly *mā'ōn* (Ps 26:8; 2 Chron 36:15), he makes himself available there as Israel's *mā'ōn* (Ps 71:3; 90:1; 91:9).

- c. Reflection on God's curtailment of human life: 3-6
 - God who created everything by his word puts humans to death by his word.
 - As he created humans from the dust he turns them back to dust.
 - The call to die is also a call to repent, to return to God.
 - God's perspective on human history differs from the human experience of it.
 - A millennium for humans is as a single day to him or a watch at night.
 - He therefore sees our lives as a whole rather than as a succession of unrelated events (cf. 2 Pet 3:8).
 - As seen by him, our living is in fact a time of dying.
 - God sweeps people away into death like a person falling helplessly asleep at the end of a busy day (cf. Ps 76:5; Job 14:12).
 - To him humans are like the flourishing green grass which withers and dies in a single hot day (cf. Ps 37:2; 92:7; 102:5, 11; 129:6; Isa 10:6, 8; 51:8).
 - This section of the psalm connects human transience with death but does not explain the cause of both.

- d. Complaint at God's wrath: 7-11
 - Note the shift of focus from the human race to 'us', those who are God's servants.
 - God's wrath is the cause of human transience and mortality.
 - It brings human life to an end (*kālāh*).
 - It demoralises and disempowers human beings (*bāhal*).
 - God's wrath results from his dealing with human sin.
 - He doesn't turn a blind eye to it and does not let it take its full course but brings it into "the light of his presence".
 - Confronted with sin, the light of his face which is usually gracious (cf. Num 6:25; Ps 4:6; 44:3; 89:15), displays his wrath (*'aph*) which exposes and burns up sin (*chēmāh*).
 - God's wrath over human sin affects people in two ways.
 - Since sin and its consequences penetrate the whole life cycle of a human being, all life is lived under God's wrath which

- 'consumes' (*killāh*) it, so that it becomes no more than a 'sigh' or 'groan'.
 - God's wrath not only shortens life but robs it of its substance, so that even a long life, regarded by the sages as a sign of God's blessing, is full of toil and trouble and is as fleeting as a bird.
- The complaint ends with a riddle that questions whether anyone could possibly know the full force of God's wrath
 - The answer to this question is **no**.
 - Traditionally the wise person feared the Lord by avoiding evil and by fearing him as he had commanded.
 - Since God's wrath was in response to human failure to fear him, a wise person could learn from his experience of God's wrath to fear him.
 - But this psalm denies the possibility of doing this as the unfathomable extent of God's wrath indicates the depth of human sin.
 - Thus only God can 'make known' (v.12) what humans cannot 'know' to those who fear him and so 'number their days.'

e. Six petitions for God's grace: 12-17

- The six petitions ask for a reversal of Israel's condition
 - Folly ► heart of wisdom
 - Experience of God's wrath ► experience of compassion
 - Frustration ► satisfaction
 - Sorrow ► rejoicing
 - Ignorance ► vision of God
 - Failure ► success in work
- The first petition is for God to teach his servants to 'number' (*mānāh*) their days so as to do a census or an audit of them.
 - Like an auditor they pray for help to 'balance the books' of their lives and 'evaluate' their experiences (cf. Dan 5:25-26), so that they can 'arrange' and 'manage' their time properly.
 - As a result of such a divinely assisted audit and rearrangement they will receive hearts of wisdom from God and discover his hidden way with them.
 - By this numbering of their days (v.14), their days of wrath (v.9) will become days of rejoicing (v.14).
- As people with wise hearts who like Moses know both God's grace and his wrath, they plead for God to turn from his wrath and change his attitude to them and treatment of them from wrath to compassion (cf. Exod 32:12; Ps 85:1,4,6,8; Joel 2:14; Jon 3:9).
- As people with wise hearts they ask God for the gift of his 'loving kindness' (cf. Exod 34:6-7).
 - It will be given like the sun in the morning of the day and their lives (cf. Ps 5:3; 30:6; 46:6; 59:16; 88:13; 143:8).
 - It will satisfy them (cf. Ps 17:15; 63:6; 65:4).

- As a result of God's kindness, their whole life will be filled with rejoicing rather than just the festive times at the temple (cf. Eccl 8:15; 9:8-9; 11:7 – 12:7).
- As people with wise hearts, they ask God to gladden them by his gracious presence and activity (Ps 86:4; 92:5; cf. Isa 56:7; Ezra 6:22; Neh 12:43).
 - Days of rejoicing to balance out day of affliction
 - Years of rejoicing to follow years of disaster
- As people with wise hearts, they ask God to reveal his saving work and allow their children to 'see' his royal majesty (*hādār*).
 - God's majesty is his splendour and power as king (Ps 29:4; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3; 145:5, 12).
 - He shares it with those who stand in his presence (cf. Ps 96:6) and serve him in his kingdom (Ps 8:5; 21:5; 45:3, 4; 149:9).
- As people with wise hearts, they pray for God's 'sweetness', his 'approval' (*nō'am*) of them, by accepting their sacrifices (see Ps 27:4).
 - As a mark of his approval he will establish and consolidate their work.
 - Their work will therefore not be futile and undone by his wrath but endure and be of lasting worth.
 - The psalm that began with God's work of creation ends with a plea for the endurance of human work.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- Use in the lectionary
 - Series A Proper 25 with the death of Moses in Deut 34:1-12
 - Series A Proper 28: the end of world
 - Series B Proper 23: the rich young ruler
 - Series B the Last Sunday of the Church Year B.
- Use in the funeral service
- Ps 90:4 is quoted in 2 Pet 3:8 to explain the apparent delay in Christ's return by reference to God's view of time.
- The extent of God's wrath over human sin is the index of his concern for human beings and his creation and a paradoxical indication of his loving kindness and mercy to his servants. Even though God's wrath pervades the whole of the human life cycle, his grace is eternal and equally available at all times.
- The closer we are to God, the more we experience his wrath, unless our sin is covered over by him.
- The understanding of God's wrath over human sin as the cause of human mortality and transience does not lead God's people to blank resignation to their fate but to petition and intercession for his grace in the face of his wrath.
- If humans build their lives on their own achievements, their days will be full of evil and their work will be undone by God's wrath, but if they build themselves on him as their safe place and on his teaching, their lives will be full of his grace and their joy with a result that their work will last.

- The Jewish tradition understands Ps 90:13-17 as prayers for the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic age.
 - Age of wrath → age of grace
 - Age of mourning → age of rejoicing
 - Age of affliction → age of splendour
 - Age of judgment → age of approval
- As children of the light we are called to 'redeem' out time by living wisely, since we know the will of God and are filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:11-20; Col 4:5).

Hymns of Praise

1. These were called *Tehillim*, **Praises**.
2. They had a very definite liturgical use at the temple in Jerusalem. See John W. Kleinig. *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*. JSOTSupp 156. Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1993.
 - a. They were sung as 'the Lord's song' (see Ps 137:4; cf. 1 Chr 25:7; 2 Chr 7:6; 29:27) by the levitical choir at the temple (see 1 Chr 25:1-8; 2 Chr 8:14).
 - b. They were performed during the burning of the public burnt offering at the climax of the sacrificial ritual each morning and evening on the altar (see Ps 92:1-3; 96:8; cf. 1 Chr 16:39-41; 23:30-31; 2 Chr 7:1-3; 23:18; 29:27-28).
 - c. The Lord's song was introduced by the sounding of cymbals by the choir leader and punctuated by the blowing of trumpets by the priests (1 Chr 16:5-6).
 - d. The Lord's song was accompanied by lyres and harps (see Ps 33:1-3; 98:5; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3; cf. 1 Chr 16:4-36; 2 Chr 29:25).
 - e. At the end of each stanza the congregation prostrated itself before the altar (see Ps 29:2; 95:6; 96:9; 99:5,9; cf. 2 Chr 29:27-29) as the priests blew their trumpets to announce the presence of the heavenly king (see Ps 98:6).
 - f. The people joined in with a cry of Hallelujah and Amen (see Ps 106:48; cf. 1 Chr 16:36).
 - g. This practice was established by David at the Lord's command given by the prophets Nathan and Gad (2 Chr 29:25).
 - h. Through the choir David performed praise on behalf of the nation for all the nations of the world (see Ps 18:49; 57:9; cf. 1 Chr 16:7; 2 Chr 7:6).
3. These hymns of praise were a form of 'preaching' at the temple, since they were basically addressed to the congregation and the whole world.
 - a. They proclaimed the Lord's name and so announced his gracious presence to the congregation (cf. 2 Chr 5:11-14).

- b. They announced the Lord's acceptance of his people with their sacrifice and his availability for petition by them (note the connection between sacrifice and prayer in 2 Chr 7:12-14).
 - c. They preached the Lord's grace and recounted his saving acts to the congregation and the whole world (see Ps 96).
 - d. They called on the people of Israel and all peoples to worship the Lord and seek his presence at the temple (see Ps 105:1-6; 1 Chr 16:8-34).
 - e. The people of Israel served as the choir for the whole universe and its people (see Ps 148) whom God had created for his praise (cf Is 43:21).
4. Formally the hymns can be divided into the following general categories.
- a. Imperative hymns which begin with a call to praise
 - Call to music, acclamation or song: 29; 33; 47; 66; 68; 81; 95; 96; 98; 100
 - Call to praise: 113; 117; 135; 146; 147; 148; 149; 150
 - Call to thanksgiving: 105; 106; 107; 118; 136
 - Call to bless: 103; 104(?); 134
 - b. Hymns of acclamation and adoration addressed to God.
 - Personal: 8; 84; 104.
 - Corporate: 65.
 - c. Narrative and descriptive hymns.
 - Personal: 19; 76
 - Corporate: 46; 48; 50; 76; 87; 93; 97; 99; 114.
5. The Structure of the Hymns.
- Call to praise to congregation or announcement of praise to God
 - Praise of God
 - Narrative of deeds
 - Description of qualities and character
 - Conclusion (one or none of the following)
 - Further call to praise or worship (66:32-35; 97:12; 99:9; 103:20-22; 104:35b; 114:7-8; 118:29; 135:19-21; 136:26)
 - Petition (19:11-14; 29:11; 33:22; 68:28-31; 84:8-11; 106; 47; cf. 1 Chron 16:35)
 - Teaching by God (50:7-23; 81:6-16; 95:8-11) or the choir (46:8-11; 48:12-14; 66:16-20)
 - Expression of wish (104:34-35b; 134:3; 145:21; 149:5-9; 150:6^a)
 - Acknowledgment of God as the source of blessing (66:20; 68:35; 106:48; 135:21).

PSALM 95

1. Text and Translation

- a. The verb *hālak* (walk) in 1 is used here as a technical term for going on procession into the temple at Jerusalem as in Ps 122:1 (see Ps 46:8; 66:5, 16; Isa 2:2-3).
- b. While *rānan* in 1 is used for non-verbal shouts raised by the congregation, the Hiphil *hērā'* is used for loud verbal cries of acclamation, as with a war cry or the greeting of a king by his people.
- c. The combination *qiddēm liphnē* in 2 is a rather rare idiom for visiting the Lord's temple and approaching him there (see Micah 6:6).
- d. The disjunctive appositional clause in 2b with its imperfect rather than cohortative is a circumstantial clause, 'as we shout aloud to him with music'.
- e. While the title *gādōl*, 'great', in 3 was used for El the head of the Canaanite pantheon, the title *melek gādōl*, 'great king', was used for the Assyrian emperor as the ruler of other vassal kings (see 2 Kgs 18:28).
- f. While *'elōhīm* could be translated by 'gods' in 4, it can also refer to angels and other superhuman beings as in Ps 8:6, 97:7, and 138:1.
- f. Instead of *mechqerē* in 4, 'unexplored depths', the LXX reads *merchaqqē*, 'distant places'.
- g. The verb *bō'* in 6 is probably used as a technical term in 6 for entry into the sanctuary area via the inner gate at the temple (see Ps 5:7; 40:7; 42:2; 65:2; 66:13; 71:16; 86:9; 100:2, 4; 118:19, 20, 26).
- h. The word *īm* is not used as the conjunction 'if' in 7 but as an exclamation to introduce a wish, 'O that'.
- i. While *gam* is normally an adverb used to denote addition, it is used as a conjunction in 9 to express a contradiction, 'even though' or 'yet'.
- j. The conjunction *'asher* is used in 9 and 11 in the sense of 'so that', or 'with the result that'.
- k. In the LXX reads *baddōr hahū'*, 'in that generation'.

2. Genre and Setting

- a. This is a hymn of praise with some modifications to the usual pattern.

- The normal imperative calls of praise to the congregation in 1 and 6 followed by cohortatives with invitations to participation in worship.
 - Like psalms 50 and 81, the psalm ends with a passage of instruction in 8-11 with God as the teacher.
- b. The psalm was obviously used for worship at the temple.
- It was associated with the ritual prostration of the congregation which, according to 2 Chron 29:27-29, occurred during the presentation of the public burnt offering each morning and evening.
 - The call of the choir to join with it in 'walking' into the temple and 'entering' the sanctuary, points to its use in processions.
 - The call to jubilation and acclamation in 1-2 indicates its use at one of the three great festivals, probably the Feast of Tabernacles (note the mention of the Lord's kingship, the wilderness period, and the gift of rest).

3. Literary Features

- The divine oracle in 8-11
- The repetition of chain words in the same or the following verse
 - 'Acclaim' in 1,2
 - 'Great' in 3
 - 'Made' 5,6
- Key words
 - 'Face/presence' in 2,6
 - 'Hand' in 4,5,7
 - 'Enter' in 6,11
 - 'People' in 7,10
 - 'Heart' in 8,10
- Chiastic structure of 4 and 5
- The psalm is built around the sequence of two imperatives in 1 and 6 followed by a positive and negative jussive in 7 and 8.

4. Structure

- a. Invitation to Approach the Lord: 1-5
- Call to congregational acclamation in approaching the Lord (1-2)
 - Acknowledgment of the Lord as King of the Universe (3-5)
- b. Invitation to Entry into the Lord's Presence: 6-7
- Call to congregational prostration before the Lord (6)
 - Confession: Lord as their God and themselves as his flock (7^a)
 - Appeal for listening to his voice (7^b)

c. God's Warning about the Consequence of Refusal to Listen: 8-11

- Hard-heartedness like Israel at Meribah (8-9)
- Their exclusion from God's rest (10-11)

5. Exegesis

a. Call for Acclamation of the Lord: 1-5

- The psalm begins with a command by the choir to the congregation for involvement in a procession into the temple at one of the three great festivals.
 - The choir sang a song of 'thanksgiving' (*tōdāh*) accompanied by instrumental 'music' (*zemīrōth*).
 - The congregation was urged to join in the praise of the choir by shouts of acclamation to the Lord.
 - Together they 'approached' his presence in the temple.
- The procession acclaimed the Lord as 'the rock of their security/deliverance' (see Ps 89:26 and the rock on which the altar was built).
 - As the cosmic rock he provided stability and safety for them (Ps 18:2; 31:2; 62:2, 6-7; 71:3) against the powers of chaos (Ps 28:1; 42:9).
 - With him they were safe from their enemies (Ps 18:31-32, 46-48; 27:5; 92:15; 144:1).
 - They could rely on him as their redeemer (Ps 19:15; 78:35).
 - From him as their rock they received life-giving water to drink (see Exod 17:6; Num 20:9-11; Deut 8:15; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:15-16,20; 105:41; 114:8; Isa 48:21).
- Both the reason for and content of their praise is given in 3-5.
 - The Lord is the supreme God and 'emperor' (see Ps 47:3; 48:2) of all other 'supernatural beings' (see Ps 29:1-2; 96:4; 97:7, 9).
 - Vertically, he controlled the whole world from the depths of the earth where the ghosts of the dead and demons were held to reside, to the peaks of the mountains where the 'gods' were believed to live and exercise their rule.
 - Horizontally, he possessed both the sea and the dry land as his domain, since he created both.
 - This meant that God's people were safe in Zion from the threat of ghosts and pagan gods, demons and chaotic cosmic powers.

b. Call for Prostration in the Sanctuary: 6-7

- The psalm continues with the second command to the congregation.
 - They are invited to enter the sanctuary with the choir.

- There they are urged to bow, kneel and prostrate themselves in homage before the Lord, their 'maker' (see Ps 149:2 and Keel, 308-11).
 - In 7 the psalm recalls the so-called covenant formula by which God commits himself to Israel and it as his people.
 - The full formula is: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people' (Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; Ezek 34:30; see also Gen 17:8; Exod 6:7; 29:45; Lev 26:45; Deut 29:13; 2 Sam 7:24; Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 34:24; 37:23,27).
 - It resembles the formula for adoption (see 2 Sam 7:14) and formula for marriage (see Hos 2:23).
 - By this formula of self-commitment the Lord offered himself to his people in their worship and made himself available to them as their God (Exod 29:45; Lev 26:45; Ezek 37:27).
 - By their act of prostration in his 'presence' they acknowledged two things.
 - The Lord was present with them as their God.
 - They were his people who depended on him and owed their exclusive allegiance to him.
 - Their relationship with the Lord was envisaged in pastoral terms.
 - He provided a 'grazing place' (Ps 74:1; 79:13; 100:3; Jer 23:1; Ezek 34:3) for them in the land with the temple.
 - As his 'flock' (Ps 77:20; 78:52; 80:2) they belonged to him and were cared for by him there.
 - By their prostration they therefore placed themselves in the 'hands' of the God who had created the earth (5) and controlled the underworld (4).
 - After the call to prostration comes an admonition of the choir to the congregation (7b).
 - It was not enough for them just to praise the Lord and pay homage to him at the temple.
 - God had called them there to 'listen' to his 'voice' as he spoke to them on the 'Today' of the festival (see Deut 4:40; 5:1-2; 6:6; 29:10,12-15; 30:11,15,18) and so revealed himself and his ways to them.
 - Their 'seeing' of God's deeds (verse 9) must lead to their 'hearing' of his word.
- c. God's Warning about the Consequence of Disobedience: 8-11
- In 8-11 God himself addressed the congregation through the choir which prophesied for him (see 1 Chron 25:1, 2, 3).
 - He warned them against 'hardening their hearts' (see Exod 7:3; Prov 28:14) by refusing to 'listen' to him.

- He reminded them of the incident at Meribah/Massah as found in Exod 17:1-7 (see also Deut 33:8 and the mention of Massah in Deut 6:16; 9:22 and Meribah in Num 20:2-13; Ps 81:7).
 - There the Israelites who lacked water 'challenged' (*merībāh* comes from *rīb*) Moses by demanding water (Exod 17:2) and 'tested' (*massāh* comes from *nissāh*) him by questioning whether the Lord was really present with them (Exod 17:7).
 - In answer to their challenge God gave them water from a rock which Moses had struck with his rod (Exod 17:5-6).
 - This incident reveals the hardheartedness of his people who had seen his salvation and yet refused to believe in him.
 - They 'tested' God (see Deut 6:16; Num 14:22; Ps 78:18, 41, 56; 106:14) and demanded 'proof' (*bāchan*; see Mal 3:15) of his presence.
 - In this they reversed roles, since God normally 'tested' and 'proved' human hearts (see Ps 26:2).
 - Their testing of the Lord, which culminated in their reaction to the report of the spies about the promised land, led to God's oath that he would not let that generation enter the land (Num 14:20-23,28-35).
 - For forty years he showed his 'disgust' (see Ezek 6:9; 29:43; 36:31; Job 10:1) at the hard-hearted determination of his people to go their own way and their refusal to acknowledge his 'ways', even though they had experienced his 'work' (see Ps 44:1; 77:12; 143:5).
- The warning of God is a kind of riddle for the people as they 'enter' the sanctuary (note the recurrence of 'enter' in 6 and 11).
 - Just as the Lord had refused to let those who had experienced his presence with them in the exodus to enter the land and find a 'resting place' (Deut 12:9; see also 3:20; 12:10) there, so those who were about to enter the temple would not enter 'God's rest', if they did not listen to God's voice and walk in his ways.
 - The temple was 'the resting place' for the Lord and his ark (Ps 132:8; 1 Chron 6:31; 28:2; Isa 66:1) where he gave 'rest' to his people (Ps 116:7; 1 Kgs 8:56; 1 Chron 23:25).
 - That rest involved protection, security, leisure and peace.
 - Whereas elsewhere in the OT God promised to give his people rest from their enemies in the land (Deut 12:10; Josh 23:1; 2 Sam 7:1,11; 1 Chron 22:9), here he gives them rest from their own disobedient hearts, since they themselves are their own worst enemies and the cause of their disaster.
 - By listening to the Lord's voice they submitted with their hearts to their ruler and entered his rest.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- Liturgical Use
 - This psalm is used by Jews in the synagogue as an invitatory at the service for the commencement of the Sabbath.
 - Ps 95:1-7 is used as a call to worship in Matins and at the beginning of many Protestant services.
- Ps 95:6-11 is set as a reading for 20 Pentecost C with the teaching on discipleship in Luke 17:1-10.
- It is quoted in Hebrews 3:7 - 4:13 which is a sermon on this text.
 - God provides access to his eternal Sabbath rest through worship in his house.
 - Those who listen to the Gospel and believe in it with their hearts enter God's rest and cease from their labour.
 - They may, however, still miss out on the eternal enjoyment of that rest through their disobedience and apostasy.
- In Psalm 95 we have a short theology of worship.
 - In the divine service we enter the Lord's presence and acknowledge his gracious sovereignty.
 - Since God's presence and his ways are revealed to us through his word, we assemble to listen to his voice as he addresses us.
 - By faith in his word we enter the eternal Sabbath rest of God in the heavenly sanctuary (see Rev 14:13).
 - Our worship is therefore a matter of resting with God and letting him speak to us.

PSALM 96

1. Text and Translation

- a. The preposition *li* is used after *shīrū* in the sense of 'about' or 'concerning' rather than 'to', since the hymn is not addressed to the Lord.
- b. To 'bless' the Lord's 'name' (cf. Ps 100:4; 103:1; 145:1,21) means to acknowledge him by his name as the giver of blessing by saying: *bārūch* (Ps 66:8→20; 68:26→35; 135:19-20→21).
- c. The verb *bissar* which is translated as *euaggelizō* in the LXX is used in the following ways in the OT
 - Secularly for the report by a herald of a battle's outcome (1 Sam 4:17; 31:9; 2 Sam 1:20; 4:10; 18:19,20,26; 1 Chron 10:9)
 - Theologically for the report of the Lord's victory over his enemies to Zion (Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1; Neh 1:15)
 - Liturgically for the praise of the Lord's victory in individual thanksgiving (Ps 40:9) and corporate praise (Ps 96:2; Isa 60:6).
 -
- d. The plural noun 'ēlīm is used as a contemptuous term for pagan deities. It comes from a verb that means to 'be weak', 'feeble,' 'ineffectual' and 'worthless.' It can also be construed as a diminutive form of 'ēl, god, with the sense of 'godling' or 'would-be god.'
- e. The two pairs of words in 6 are cases of hendiadys in which the second word qualifies the first. Behind them both lies the imagery of royal dress which indicated three things in the ancient world
 - The king's position
 - The king's powers
 - The king's status

The Lord is said to be clothed with 'authority' (*hōd*) and 'splendid attire' (*hādār*) as marks of his position (Ps 104:1; cf. 93:1; 110:3). He bestows them on human beings (Ps 8:5), the king (Ps 21:5; 45:3) and his people (Ps 96:6; cf. 90:16; 149:9). In that case we could translate the phrase *hōd wēhādār* as 'invested authority' or 'majesty with high honour.' The 'head-dress' (*pē'ēr*) of people indicated their 'honourable status' (*tiph'ereh*) in the ancient world. The Lord who had high status (Ps 71:8; Isa 61:9; 1 Chron 29:11,13), shared it with Israel (Deut 26:19; Ps 89:17; cf. Ps 149:4; Isa 44:23) and Zion (Isa 52:1; Jer 33:9; cf. Isa 60:21; 61:3). In that case we could translate the phrase: *ōz wētiph'ereh* as 'invested power' or 'power with status.'
- f. The form *hābū* is the plural imperative from root *yāhab*.
- g. The phrase *kābōd wēōz* means 'powerful glory.'

- h. The phrase *běhadrath qōdesh* in 9, found here and in Ps 29:2; 1 Chron 16:29 (cf. 2 Chron 20:21; Ps 110:3) can be construed and translated as follows
- ‘In the beauty of holiness,’ ie the state of the sanctified worshipper
 - ‘In holy attire,’ ie the clothing of the priests and levitical singers (cf. 2 Chron 5:12)
 - ‘At the manifestation of holiness,’ ie the theophany of the Lord at the temple (see the use of *hdrt* in Ugaritic in this sense)
 - ‘In the splendour of the sanctuary,’ ie the location for prostration (see the LXX which reads ‘in the court’)
 - ‘In his holy splendour/attire,’ ie the royal majesty of the Lord.
- Of those, the last two are most likely.
- h. While *chīl* is used literally for the labour pain of a woman giving birth to a child, it is used metaphorically in 9 for the trembling of the earth at the appearance of the heavenly king.
- i. The sense and function of the phrase *YHWH mālāk* in 10 has been the subject of much debate, since Mowinckel, drawing on accounts of royal enthronements in 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 1:11,13,18; and 2 Kgs 9:13, used it to argue for the use of this psalm in an enthronement festival for the Lord.
- Does it mean: ‘YHWH has become king’ (the assumption of kingship), or ‘YHWH is king’ (the state of kingship), or ‘YHWH reigns as king’ (ongoing eternal kingship). The latter is most likely in view of the reference to creation in 5.
 - Did it originally function as the formula of investiture at the Lord's enthronement, or a cry of acclamation with an act of homage to the Lord, or a declaration of fidelity by his subjects, or as a proclamation of kingship? Whatever its origin, it functions as formal proclamation in Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; and 99:1 (see M Z Brettler, *God is King* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 141-158).
- j. While the MT construes *tikkūn* in 10 as the 2 fs imp. Niphal of *kūn*, the LXX construes it as *tikkēn*, ie the 3 ms pf. Piel of *tākan*: ‘he has established/regulated’ (cf Ps 75:4).
- k. The phrase *ki bā’* can be construed in a number of ways.
- *Ki* can mean either ‘when’ or ‘because.’
 - *Bā’* can be taken as a perfect (‘he has come’ or ‘he came’) or as a participle with a present sense (‘he comes’ or ‘he is coming’) or a future sense (‘he will come’). The present or future sense fits best in the light of the following imperfect.

2. Genre and Setting

- a. Psalm 96 is an imperative hymn of praise.

- (1) It belongs to the so-called enthronement psalms: 47, 93, 96-99.
 - (2) Scholars deduce from Zech 14:16-17 that it and all these psalms were originally used at the autumn festival (Tabernacles)
 - In the annual enactment of the Lord's enthronement (Mowinckel)?
 - In the renewal of the Sinai covenant with a re-enacted theophany (Weiser)?
 - In the annual royal celebration of the election of David and Zion (Kraus)?
 - In the annual celebration of the Lord's kingship (most present scholars)
- b. The LXX ascribes this psalm to David and adds that it was used 'when the temple was built after the captivity.'
- c. Most of this psalm is found combined with Ps 105:1-15 and 106:47-48 in 1 Chron 16:8-36.
- (1) It is presented as an example of the praise which David had appointed to be sung by the levitical choir morning and evening in Jerusalem.
 - (2) It indicates that the psalm was used to accompany the daily burnt offering at the temple (cf. the reference to the cereal offering and prostration in 8).

3. Literary Features

- a. The use of climactic three-step parallelism
 - 1-2a: repetition of 'Sing to the Lord'
 - 2b-3: progression from 'his victory' to 'his glory' to 'his miracles'
 - 7-8a: repetition of 'Ascribe to the Lord'
 - 8b-9: progression from 'in his courts' to 'to the Lord' to 'at his presence'
 - 10: progression from 'reigning' to 'being established' to 'executing justice'
 - 11-12a: progression from 'heaven and earth' to 'sea' to 'arable land'
- b. The use of inclusion
 - All the earth: 1,9
 - World/arable land: 10,13
 - Peoples: 10,13
- c. Key words
 - The earth: 1,9,11,13

- All: 1,3,4,5,9,12
- Peoples: 3,5,7,10,13
- His name: 2,8
- Glory: 3,7
- Heavens: 5,11
- Power: 6,7

4. Structure

- a. Proclamation of the Lord's Victory: 1-9
 - Call for the earth to sing a new song of victory (1-3)
 - Reason for the new song (4-6)
 - The Lord's triumph over all other gods
 - Gift of divine honours and powers from the Lord
 - Call for all peoples to worship the Lord at the temple (7-9)
 - by acknowledging him for their status and power
 - by presenting an offering and performing prostration before him

- b. Announcement and Celebration of the Lord's Advent: 10-13
 - Commission of all peoples as heralds of the Lord's rule
 - Summons to the whole natural world to rejoice in the Lord
 - Celebration of the Lord's coming in judgment

5. Exegesis

- a. Proclamation of the Lord's Victory: 1-9
 - (1) The psalm begins with the call by the choir to sing 'a new song.'
 - (a) This does not just refer to a new composition but to a new act of the Lord which evokes new praise and so extends the repertoire of praise at the temple.
 - (b) Hence in laments a person promised to sing a new song, when the Lord rescued him from the realm of death (Ps 40:4) or gave him a victory (Ps 144:9-10).
 - (c) So the congregation was at times called to sing a new song in response to the Lord's mighty deeds (Ps 33:3; 98:1; 149:1) or in anticipation of them (Isa 42:10).

- (d) In this psalm the new song not only recalls the Lord's deeds in creating the heavens and in dispossessing the gods of the nations, but also announces his advent as judge of the whole world.
- (2) This new song was to be sung daily by a global choir to an international audience.
- (a) It was not just sung occasionally but daily at the temple (2).
 - (b) By it the choir did not just call the Israelite congregation with all its families but also the whole earth with all families from the nations to join in with it. Note that at the festivals representatives of each 'family' were present at the temple.
 - (c) These families, in turn, were called to address this song to the 'nations' (Ps 18:49) and 'all peoples' (Ps 9:10; 57:9; 105:1; Isa 12:4).
- (3) The nature of this song is described by the three imperatives in 2-3.
- (a) The peoples were to 'bless' the Lord's name (Ps 72:19; 100:4; 103:1; 113:2; 145:1, 21) by acknowledging the Lord's name as the source of blessing.
 - (b) They were to act as heralds to the nations by 'telling the good news' of the Lord's victory over all their 'so-called gods.'
 - (c) They were to proclaim the Lord's 'glory,' his character and gracious presence (see Ps 26:8; 29:9; 63:2; 102:16), as well as his 'miracles' (see Isa 9:1; 26:7; 75:1; 78:4) on the international stage (cf. the connection between the presence of the Lord's glory in the temple and its manifestation through praise in 2 Chron 5:11-14).
- (4) Just as the heavens 'declared the Lord's glorious presence' in their midst by the operation of the sun (Ps 19:1-7), so the congregation was called to declare his glorious presence in their midst by this song.
- (5) The first reason for the new song was that the Lord had proved himself to be 'greater,' more 'praise-worthy' (Ps 18:3; 48:1; 113:3; 145:3) and more 'wonderful' (Ps 47:2; 66:3,5; 68:35; 76:7, 12; 89:7) than all other gods.

- (a) By his miraculous deeds (3) he had won a great victory over them (2).
 - (b) He had shown that they were 'weaklings' (Lev 19:4; 26:1; Isa 2:8,18,20; 10:10,11; 19:1-3; 31:7; Ezek 50:13).
 - (c) He had been able to overpower them, because he had made the heavens which were their special domain and sphere of power.
 - (d) It is not certain whether 'the miraculous deeds' refers to the Lord's work in creation or the exodus or in some other event of Israel's history such as the return from exile.
- (6) The second reason for the new song was that the Lord had made himself and his powers available to the peoples of the earth in his sanctuary.
- (a) The Lord was present with his 'glory' (3) in the sanctuary of the temple and revealed it to his people through his name (8; see Ps 66:2; 72:19; 79:9).
 - (b) There, like a king with his courtiers, he shared his 'royal authority' (Ps 21:5; 90:16; 149:9), his 'power' (Ps 29:11; 63:2; 68:35; 84:5; 86:16; 105:4) and his 'status' (Ps 89:17) with his people. None of these could, however, be had apart from his presence, since they were all derived and delegated powers dependent on contact with him.
- (7) Since the Lord was present with his 'glory' and 'power' in the temple for all the families of the peoples, they were called to praise the Lord together with Israel and, by implication with the borrowing of 7-8 from Ps 29:1-2, with the Lord's heavenly courtiers.
- (a) First, they were to 'ascribe glory and power to the Lord' (cf. Deut 32:3) by acknowledging the Lord's 'glory' and 'power' at the temple and to proclaim 'his name' as the means by which he manifested his glory and power (cf. Ps 29:9 and the use of doxology in the NT and the early church).
 - (b) Secondly, like vassals who brought tribute to their overlord and paid homage to him at his palace (Ps 72:10-11; cf. 1 Chron 18:2,6), they were to bring a 'grain offering' to the Lord in his courts and prostrate themselves before him (see the mention of grain offering from the Gentiles in Isa 19:21; Mal 1:11).

- (8) The earth itself was called to join its inhabitants in paying homage to the Lord.
- (a) Those psalms which depicted the Lord's theophany on earth described its impact on the natural world by comparing it to the 'writhing' and 'trembling' of a woman in labour (Ps 29:8,9; 77:16; 97:4; 114:7; Hab 3:10).
 - (b) In this psalm the earth is called to tremble with excitement and joy (cf. v.11) in the presence of the Lord because of what was happening to it.
 - (c) In this way it too joined with Israel and all peoples in singing the new song to the Lord (see the elaboration of this idea in 11-12).

b. Announcement and Celebration of the Lord's Advent: 10-13

- (1) In 10 the peoples of the earth are commissioned to act as heralds of the Lord to the nations.
- (a) As a result of the Lord's victory over the gods they could now announce his reign as king.
 - (b) His rule extended over all the 'habitable world' (*tēbēl*) and its peoples.
 - (c) The 'ecological' order of the world, which had been established at creation (Ps 104:5) but had been disrupted by injustice (Ps 82:5), was about to be restored by the heavenly King in an act of re-creation (cf. 93:1).
 - (d) As the divine king of the whole world he would 'establish justice' by ruling 'fairly' and redressing the wrongs suffered by all peoples (see God's judgment in Ps 54:1; 72:2; 135:14; cf. Gen 30:6; Deut 32:36; Jer 5:28; 21:12; 22:16).
 - (e) The use of the imperfect tenses in 10 b-c indicates that the restoration of order and justice would either occur in the future or else begin already in the present.
- (2) With performative jussives which parallel the commands of the Lord in creation (cf. Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14-15,24), the natural world is summoned and empowered to announce and celebrate the Lord's advent (cf. Ps 69:34; 98:7-8; Isa 42:10-11; 44:23; 49:13; 55:12).

- (a) First, the heavens are called to 'rejoice' (Isa 44:23; 49:13).
 - (b) Secondly, the earth is called to 'dance with joy' (Ps 69:34; Isa 44:23; 49:13; cf. 42:10-11).
 - (c) Thirdly, the sea and its contents are called to 'thunder' (Ps 98:7; cf. Ps 69:34; Isa 42:10).
 - (d) Fourthly, all the arable land and everything on it are called to 'exult.'
 - (e) By its summons in this song of victory the congregation evokes and produces an appropriate form of praise from each of these.
- (3) The announcement of the Lord's victory results in the celebration of his advent in 13.
- (a) The trees of the forest would greet their king with cries of joy (Isa 44:23; 55:12; cf. Ps 29:5, 8-9; 148:9).
 - ❖ As the species which contained the largest living creatures growing on the earth, the trees would welcome his coming to judge the earth.
 - ❖ Since the trees of the forest also traditionally symbolised the various classes of people in the wisdom tradition (1 Kgs 4:33; cf. Isa 10:18-19,33-34; 29:17; 32:15,19; Ezek 17:1-24; 31:2-18), 12b may refer to the jubilation of both botanical and human life.
 - (b) They would greet their king as he 'came' to them (Ps 98:9).
 - ❖ The verb *bā'* was used for the coming of the Lord in a theophany to his people (Exod 19:9, 20; Deut 32:2; Isa 30:27; 35:4; 40:10; Zech 14:5) and for his coming to meet with his people at the temple (Ps 24:7, 9; 50:3; 68:17; Zech 2:14; Mal 3:1, 2).
 - ❖ Here it is used in both these senses, since the coming of the Lord to his people in their worship anticipates his final theophany to the whole cosmos.
 - (c) The divine king comes to the earth to 'judge' it.
 - ❖ The psalm reflects the pattern of events in the ancient world, when a new king assumed the throne. After conquering his enemies, he would set his kingdom in order.

- ❖ The verb 'judge' here is used in the sense of 'righting what was wrong' and 'ruling justly' (see Ps 9:7-8; 67:4; 75:2; 82:8).
- ❖ As king of the world his rule would be marked by 'righteousness' and 'faithfulness' rather than 'injustice' and 'dishonesty.'

(d) This new song to the Lord not only praises the Lord for what he had done in creation and in Israel's history, but also announces his present and future rule over the whole earth.

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- a. This psalm is set to be read
 - Partly, 1-2 and 11-13, on Christmas Eve with Luke 2:1-14
 - Entirely for the first service on Christmas Day with Luke 2:1-14
 - Entirely for Pentecost 22 A with Matt 22:15-21 and its discussion of paying taxes and giving God what belongs to him
- b. There are a number of clear allusions to this psalm in the NT.
 - (1) The new song of the redeemed with the heavenly host in Rev 5:9 and 14:3 is the fulfilment of 96:1.
 - (2) The proclamation by the angel of the eternal gospel in Rev 14:6-7 with its call to the nations to give God glory and make prostration before him is the fulfilment of 92:2-3, 7-9.
 - (3) The announcement of God's reign as king of the world in Rev 19:6 recalls Ps 96:10.
 - (4) The call for the heavens to rejoice in God's triumph over Satan in Rev 12:12 recalls Ps 96:11.
 - (5) The reference to Jesus as judge of the world in Acts 17:31 and Rev 19:10 recalls Ps 96:10,13.

Psalm 110

1. Text and Translation

- a. The imperative *redāh* in 2 states the result of the previous action.
- b. Verse 3 is the most obscure text in the whole psalter which consists in its present form of a series of phrases with no verbs.
 - Instead of '*ammekā nedābōth*, 'your people/army (is) voluntary offering/ willingness', the LXX reads '*immekā nedībōth*, 'with you is princely rank / the nobility.'
 - While the MT reads *behadrē qōdesh* 'with holy attire/regalia' or 'in the splendour of holiness', some other manuscripts read *beharrē qōdesh* 'on the holy mountains' (cf. Ps 87:1).
 - *Mishchār* is a unique word that is equivalent to *shachar*, 'dawn'.
 - Instead of following the tradition of the MT which reads *yalduthekā*, 'your youth/your young men', the LXX, influenced by Ps 2:7, points *yelidtikā*, 'I have begotten you', and so takes the latter part of 3 as another oracle of the Lord.
- c. The final *yodh* with *dibrathī* and *malkī* in 4 are cases of the old Hebrew construct case ending.
- d. There is some uncertainty as to whether God or the king is the subject of the verbs in 5-7. There are three possibilities for interpretation..
 - While God is the subject of 5-6, the king could be the subject of 7. In that case *yārīm* should be repointed as *yārūm*, '(his) head will be high'.
 - The king could be the subject of all this section. In that case 'lord' in 5 refers to the king as in 1 and so should be repointed as '*adōni*.'
 - While God is the subject of 5a and 7b, the king could be the subject of 5b-7a. In that case *yārīm* would not have to be repointed as *yārūm* (see Ps 3:4 and 27:6). This option seems most likely, despite the shift from speaking to the king in 5a to speaking about the king in the third person in 5b-7a. Such shifts are not unusual in visionary prophecy (see Gen 49:8-9; Num 24:5-7; Mic 3:1-4).
- e. Some versions read *gēbāyōth*, 'valleys', rather than *gewiyyōth*, 'bodies/corpses' in 6.
- f. While most translators take *r'ōsh* in 6 as a collective plural, 'heads', the use of the same term in 7 indicates that a single person is mentioned, 'the head of the great land/chief land/wide earth'.

2. Royal Psalms

- a. See chapter 10 in Bullock, *Encountering the Book of the Psalms*, 177-86.
- b. Since the following psalms are clearly used on royal occasions during the monarchy, they were obviously composed for the Davidic kings in Israel. They presuppose a theology of kingship and were included in the Psalter in the post-exilic period because they were regarded as prophetic and Messianic.
 - Psalm 2: anointing or coronation of a king
 - Psalm 18: royal thanksgiving for victory in battle (cf. 2 Sam 22)
 - Psalm 20: Intercession of a king and blessing of him before battle
 - Psalm 21: Thanksgiving for past victories of the king and confidence in future victories by the Lord through the king
 - Psalm 45: royal wedding
 - Psalm 72: prayer for the king as the administrator of God's justice and righteousness
 - Psalm 89: lament for the lack of a king on David's throne
 - Psalm 101: king's pledge of loyalty and integrity before God
 - Psalm 110: enthronement of a king
 - Psalm 132: prayer for God's blessing of the king and God's promise of blessing for Zion
 - Psalm 144: prayer for the security of the king and the nation
- c. The king is also mentioned in parts of other psalms, such as 28:8; 61:5-6; 63:11; 78:70-72; and 84:9. So it is possible that these and other psalms were also originally used by or for the king.

3. Genre and Setting

- Royal psalm (see Ps 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, 138, 144)
 - Visionary prophecy by court prophet (see 2 Sam 24:11; 1 Chron 21:9; 25:5; 2 Chron 29:25; 35:15)
 - Addressed by prophet to his royal master
- Occasion: enthronement of the king
 - Mention of throne with footstool (1)
 - Mention of sceptre (2)
 - Mention of royal robes (3)
- Messianic psalm.
 - When this psalm was sung by the royal choir as the mouthpiece of David and his successors, it became a psalm of David about his messianic heir.
 - This is how it functions canonically and how it was regarded by Jesus (Matt 22:44) and Peter (Acts 2:34).

3. Literary Features

- Divine oracles addressed to king in 1 b-d and 4c-d
- Montage of images associated with royalty in antiquity
 - King seated on throne next to God
 - Depiction of enemies on the footstool of the throne
 - Gift of sceptre by God to his king as instrument of divine power used to smash the heads of enemies
 - Nobility as willing allies of king in battle
 - Identification of the king with the morning star
 - Life-giving power of the king compared to dew
 - God as the king's bodyguard in battle
 - The piling up of corpses after battle by the victorious king
 - The exaltation of the king by God to a position of honour
- The pattern of contrasts in the psalm
 - The king's feet in 1 and his head in 7
 - The king as the poet's lord in 1 and Yahweh as the king's Lord in 5
 - The right hand of the Lord in 1 and the right hand of the king in 5
 - The king's day of valour in 3 and the Lord's day of wrath in 5
- Chainlike linkage of verses by repetition of words
 - YHWH in 1 and 2 (cf 4)
 - 'Your enemies' in 1 and 2
 - The preposition 'al' in 4, 5, 6 and 7
 - 'King' in 4 and 5
 - 'Smash' in 5 and 6
 - 'Head' in 6 and 7

4. Structure

a. The Enthronement of the King: 1-3

- The Divine Oracle (1)
 - The enthronement of the king by divine decree
 - The Lord's subjugation of enemies through the king
- The Vision of the King's Power.
 - The king's sceptre as the instrument of divine power (2)
 - The people's support of the epoch making king (3)

b. The Ordination of the King : 4-7

- The Divine Oath (4)
 - The unchangeability of the oath
 - The king's ordination to the royal priesthood by divine decree
- The Vision of the King's Triumph.
 - His protection by the Lord (5a)
 - His conquest of kings (5b-6)
 - His drink from the river (7a)
 - His exaltation by the Lord (7b)

5. Exegesis

a. The King's Enthronement by God's Decree: 1

- The royal prophet announces the Lord's decree to the king.
 - He describes it as an 'oracle', a whispered word of prophecy from the Lord.
 - He acknowledges the king as his 'lord' and 'master'.
- By this decree the Lord enthrones the king at his right hand (see Keel, 263-64).
 - In royal protocol the person enthroned at the king's right hand was either second in rank or co-regent with him (Ps 80:17; see Ps 45:9; 1 Kgs 2:19).
 - Spatially, the king lived and was enthroned in his palace which lay on the right side of the temple.
 - By this decree he is therefore installed as the Lord's deputy and co-regent.
- The Lord enthroned him as his deputy, so that through the king he could subdue the king's enemies.
 - Traditionally, the king's enemies were God's enemies who were allied with the powers of chaos and disrupted the divinely instituted moral order.
 - The king's mandate to subdue his enemies was traditionally symbolised by the picture of them on the footstool of his throne (see Keel, 253-56).
 - The Lord here promises to subdue the king's enemies for him rather than the king doing this for the Lord (see Ps 81:14; 1 Chron 17:10).

b. The Vision of the King's Power in the Explanation of the Oracle: 2-3

- The vision first explains the sceptre/mace received by the king at his coronation (see Keel, 291-97, 299).
 - The sceptre was the symbol and instrument of divinely given power exercised by the king (see Ps 2:9; Num 24:17).
 - The Lord however is envisaged as the one who wields the power through the king from his temple/palace in Zion.
 - As the Lord's agent the king will be able to 'rule', even though he is surrounded by enemies.
 - The term for rule *rādāh*, which is used transitively for treading down people, is used intransitively for a farmer or landowner treading on his land and keeping it in good order. Here and elsewhere it implies the stewardship of creation, the maintenance of righteousness and the establishment of peace rather than the domination of creation, the exploitation of

- others and the violent exercise of power (Ps 72:8; see Gen 1:26,28; Num 24:19; 1 Kgs 4:24).
- This vision is followed by a montage of cryptic images of the king's priestly rule.
 - First, the people who make up the tribal militia give their willing support to the king in battle.
 - Secondly, dressed in holy robes which indicate his sanctity as king, he emerges like the morning star (see Num 24:11) from the womb of twilight to usher in a new day (see Luke 1:78; Rev 22:16; note that some interpreters take this phrase as a reference to his supernatural origin and nature).
 - Thirdly, by virtue of his youth, the king brings life-giving, rejuvenating 'dew' to his people and the land.
 - ❖ Literally, *tāl* was the term for the fine overnight drizzle in early spring which produced most of the annual precipitation and so ensured a good harvest (see Ps 72:6 and 2 Sam 23:4 for the comparison of the king's rule with rainfall on the land).
 - ❖ Mythologically, Dew was the life-sustaining daughter of Baal in Ugarit, while honey-dew (ambrosia) was elsewhere regarded as the divine food for immortality (see Isa 26:19 with its reference to heavenly dew which gives life to the dead).
 - ❖ Theologically, dew was used as an image for God's life-giving blessing of the land (see Gen 27:28, 39; Deut 33:13; Zech 8:12).

c. The Ordination of the King by Divine Oath: 4

- The position of the king did not just depend on the Lord's decree but also on his oath.
 - Since there is no one higher than God, his promise is his oath.
 - Since it is an oath, the Lord will not and cannot change it under any circumstances.
- The oath confers perpetual priestly status to the king.
 - As the King of Jerusalem, he was not just the legal successor of Melchizedek, but was also a priest-king like him (see Gen 14:18-20).
 - His priesthood therefore differed from the priesthood of Aaron and his successors.
 - As far as we can gather from other data the king was ordained with the holy oil to perform the following sacral functions.
 - ❖ Like Melchizedek he acknowledged that the people were blessed by God (see 2 Sam 6:18; 1 Kgs 8:14-21, 55-61).
 - ❖ He interceded for them (see 2 Sam 24:17; 1 Kgs 8:22-54; 2 Chron 14:11; 20:5-12).

- ❖ He presented sacrifices on behalf of the nation and the land (see 2 Sam 6:13,17; 24:21,25; 1 Kgs 8:62-63; 9:25; 2 Chron 8:12).
- ❖ Through the levitical choir he led the people in praise (1 Chron 16:7-41; 25:1-6; 2 Chron 8:14; see 2 Sam 6:14; 1 Chron 15:27).
- He therefore acted as leader of the congregation.
- As indicated by the name *Melchizedek*, 'The King is Righteousness', he administered the Lord's righteousness through his patronage of public worship and involvement in it (see 2 Sam 23:3-4; Ps 72:1-2).

d. The Vision of the King's Triumph: 5-7

- Verses 5-7 show how the priest-king administers the Lord's righteousness.
- First, the royal prophet addresses the king directly (5a).
 - He had earlier called the king his 'lord' but now calls Yahweh his Lord in order to emphasize the king's dependence on his divine overlord.
 - Since the king has priestly status, he not only has access to the Lord at the temple but also has his personal support.
 - The king who was enthroned at the Lord's right hand had the Lord at his right hand as a champion in battle (see Ps 16:8; 121:5; Isa 63:12) and as a defender in a court of law (see Ps 109:31).
- Secondly, the prophet shows how the priest-king acts as the agent of the Lord's wrath (see Ps 2:11).
 - On 'the day of his wrath' the Lord judged the wicked and established justice on earth (see Job 20:28; Isa 13:13; Lam 1:12; 2:1).
 - On that day the king would 'crush' (see Ps 18:38; Num 24:17; Judg 5:26) the wicked kings with his sceptre and pile up corpses in order to establish international justice for the oppressed on earth (see Ps 72:2).
 - He would also crush the 'head', 'chief' or 'leader', of the 'wide land / whole earth' (*'eretz rabbāh*).
 - The term 'wide land' only occurs here. If it is taken as the counterpart of 'the wide abyss' (*tehōm rabbāh*), as in Amos 7:4; Gen 7:11; Isa 51:10; and Ps 36:6, its head must be the world ruler with cosmic powers and so identical with the leader in Hab 3:13-14.
- Thirdly, in 7a the prophet describes the king drinking from a creek by the way. This has been interpreted in three main ways.
 - As a reference to the rite of drinking from the Gihon Spring as part of the coronation ceremony (see 1 Kgs 1:38-40)

- As a reference to the spring of life flowing from the holy mountain or divine sanctuary (see Ps 36:8; 46:5; 87:7; Gen 2:10-12; Ezek 47:1-12; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8; see also Keel, 138-40)
- As a reference to the role of the king in taming and using the waters of chaos, so that they do not flood the earth but provide water in the dry season (see the work of the divine king in opening up springs in Ps 74:15; Prov 3:20).
- Lastly, as a result of his victory over the 'head' of the wide earth, the Lord raises him high.
 - The Lord honours him by raising his head (see Ps 3:3; 27:6).
 - The Lord makes him 'head' of the wide earth (see Ps 18:43; 118:22; 1 Chron 16:7).

6. Liturgical and Theological Use

- a. It is set for the Feast of the Ascension which celebrates the kingship of Jesus and his reign with his heavenly Father.
- b. The New Testament quotes and alludes to it more than any other psalm.
 - Jesus quoted Ps 110:1 on two different occasions.
 - In argument with the Pharisees he used it to show that the Messiah would not just be David's son, his descendant, but God's Son and David's Lord (Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43).
 - At his trial Jesus claimed to fulfil that psalm when he announced that, after his crucifixion, he would be seated at God's right hand (Luke 22:61), and that his opponents would eventually see him seated there (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62).
 - The apostles used 110:1 to preach that after his resurrection he was enthroned as the Christ and High Priest at God's right hand in the heavenly realm (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34-35; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3,13:12:2).
 - There he exercises his divine rule over the whole cosmos for the benefit of the church (Eph 1:20-23).
 - There he works with his Father in putting all enemies under his feet (1 Cor 15:25; Heb 10:12-13).
 - The writer of Hebrews used 110:4 to explain the nature and work of Jesus as our great high priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1-20,28).
 - Peter may allude to both 110:1 and 7 when he speaks in Acts 5:31 of God exalting Jesus at his right hand as Leader and Saviour.
- c. This psalm is paraphrased in hymns 110 and 115.