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Psalm Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this informative overview, Steve Gregg discusses the book of Psalms in the Old Testament, highlighting its unique features as a collection of poetry containing prayers, praises, and prophetic messages. Gregg notes the use of parallelism and acrostic poems as common features in Hebrew poetry and the emotional power these techniques can wield. The discussion also touches on the Messianic significance of the Psalms, with several types of psalms seen as referring to the reign of the Messiah and containing various names and titles for him.

Transcript

What we've been doing here, whenever we gather in this particular location, which isn't very often, once every month or two, we're going through the Bible. Each time we meet, we take one of the successive books. We've taken everything up to the Psalms.

We're now, each time, having an introduction and a survey of the books that we're studying. Now, Psalms is a little different to survey because it's not as if it's a story. Most of the books we've looked at in the Old Testament so far have been stories, from Genesis up through Chronicles.

It's all narrative. To survey the story is basically a survey of the book. But Psalms isn't a story.

It contains stories. It contains historical records, or at least historical recollections. But it's a different kind of book.

Now, last time we were studying the book of Job, and that was the first book in the arrangement of our Old Testament canon that's called one of the poetry books, or one of the wisdom books. Job happens to belong to both classes, poetry and wisdom. Now, all the books from Job through Ecclesiastes, actually through the Song of Solomon, are poetry books.

Not all of them are technically called wisdom literature, and the Psalms are not generally wisdom literature, but they are poetry. Now, we're going to talk about Hebrew poetry a

little bit. We did when we talked about Job.

And we're going to talk about what we find in the Psalms, and maybe help you understand the Psalms a little bit, because not everyone finds them easy. I know I didn't when I was young. I've read the Bible since I was young, and I started teaching the Bible when I was a teenager.

And I remember, as a young teacher, often hearing older people say how much they loved the book of Psalms. And I remember thinking, really? You really love that book? Well, I guess that's fine. I mean, to each his own.

I liked the historical narratives. I liked the Gospels. I liked even the epistles of Paul and Revelation.

I liked those kinds of books. They were more exciting to me than the Psalms, but it was only because I wasn't old enough to appreciate the Psalms yet. Because the Psalms resonate with people as they live their lives and go through experiences.

And I was pretty young and had very few experiences and had a pretty easy life when I was in my teens. I didn't have a traumatic upbringing like some people did. And I was actually pretty happy and well adjusted.

And Psalms didn't always, I mean, I'd read about David and the Psalms talking about how many trials they're going through and how many people had betrayed them and how horrible life was for them. But it just didn't do anything for me. For one thing, I wasn't really fond of poetry.

That's another strange thing I cannot understand. I love Hebrew poetry. I love the poetic books now.

And I love the historic books. However, in secular education, in high school, I didn't like history at all, nor poetry. In English classes, poetry just didn't do anything for me at all.

And history was as boring as any subject I ever was taught. I'd have to say maybe I wasn't taught because history is far from boring. And poetry is far from boring if you know how to appreciate it.

And I have to say that although I came through high school with no appreciation for history or poetry, just as an adult, I find that the historical narratives, not only of Scripture, but of even secular history that surrounds it is fascinating to me. And the poetry of the Psalms and of the prophets and of the Proverbs and of Job, I appreciate them far more now. Of course, I had to come to understand something about poetry.

And so we're going to hopefully build that kind of foundation so that you can appreciate the Psalms. Maybe you already do. But whether you do or not, I hope you'll have some

greater appreciation for them after we go through this introduction and survey of the book.

The Hebrew name in the Hebrew Bible of this book is Sefer Tehillim, which literally means a book of praises. Now, not everything in the book of Psalms is a book of praises, but certainly that is one of the major themes, the praising of God. Even many of the Psalms begin with the word Alleluia and end with, and some of the same Psalms end with the word Alleluia.

Alleluia, a very common word in the Psalms, though not in all the Psalms. Alleluia means praise Yahweh or praise Jehovah. And I guess the easiest way to summarize the contents of the Psalms for the Hebrews in the Hebrew Bible, they called it the book of praises, Sefer Tehillim.

Now, when the book was translated into Greek, and that was done by a group of Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, about three centuries before Christ, the product of that translating effort was called the Septuagint. It was the translation of the Hebrew scriptures and other religious books of the Jews from Hebrew into Greek. And so they had to come up with a Greek name for the book and they didn't give it a name that means book of praises in Greek.

They gave it the word Psalms, from which our English word Psalms obviously is derived. Now, Psalms in the Greek means a poem that is written to be accompanied by a stringed instrument. A poem that is written to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

Obviously, it's more than a poem. It's a song to be sung. And it's not to be sung a cappella, particularly, although there's certainly nothing wrong with doing so.

It's to be accompanied by instrumental music. Now, there are people in church history and even today who have felt like instrumental music is not really appropriate for the church. And, you know, anyone who's gone to one of these churches knows that the a cappella singing in these churches is just beautiful because when you don't have musical instruments, you really learn how to sing well.

And people do all these harmonies and so forth. And but some of these groups don't believe that it's morally right or spiritually appropriate to have musical instruments in the church. And that would be, to my mind, a strange position to take in view of the fact that the Psalms, not only the word Psalms means poems to be accompanied by stringed instruments, but many of the Psalms actually encourage the use of stringed instruments in praising the Lord.

Psalm 33 talks about making a song on the instrument of 10 strings. Certainly Psalm 150 is completely about musical instruments being used in praise of God. And more than that, we have three times in the New Testament that we are exhorted to sing the

Psalms.

One of them is in Ephesians chapter five. And it'd be verse probably 19, I guess it would be where it's or 20, where it says that we should speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The word Psalms is the same as the name of this book in Greek.

Colossians also tells us to do the same in Colossians chapter three. And James in James chapter five tells us, is any Mary that is anyone here happy? Let him sing the Psalms. So the New Testament writers approve of singing the Psalms.

And of course, many of these Psalms actually command or exhort to play musical instruments. And even if they didn't, the word Psalm itself, which is used by the New Testament writers, refers to a poem or song accompanied by instruments. So while I have nothing against a cappella singing, and I've been in churches where it's where I frankly, I'd rather hear the song sung a cappella than other churches where I've been.

I'd much rather the instruments weren't present in the worship time. What I prefer is not what's important. It's really what the Bible says.

The Bible does not forbid musical instruments. If anything, it encourages the use of them in the worship of God. So that not only the human voice, which is the most versatile musical instrument in the world, but also, you know, mechanical musical instruments that men have made have been employed.

And that's what the word Psalms suggests. Now, the book itself isn't simply praises as the Hebrew title would have given the impression that it is, but it's a number of things. The book contains prayers and praises and historical recollections.

Some of the Psalms are just recitations of Hebrew history, Jewish history, going through some of the stories we would already already know from historical books, reciting them, making a point about the history. Soliloquies where the psalmist is kind of talking as it were to himself about, you know, things he's he's pensive about. And of course, prophecies, there's prophetic Psalms.

Many of them are about the Messiah. Who would not yet come for another thousand years after the Psalms were written. And so there's all it's almost like a little Bible because the Bible itself contains history.

It contains prayers and praise. It contains prophecies. There's a sense in which Psalms, the book Psalms, has all of those things, not in equal proportions to the rest of the Bible, but certainly some of each are there.

And so you're going to have a variety of kinds of material in the Psalms, but they will all be in poetry. And so we have to know something about Hebrew poetry. Now, this is not

the first time I've talked about Hebrew poetry because we talked about it somewhat in Job.

But let me just say a few things about Hebrew poetry, if I could. It's a very common mode of expression in worship. Literature and in what they call wisdom literature.

And in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, poetry is very common. In fact, there are some scholars who believe that if you take the sayings of Jesus. Which are recorded for us in Greek in the New Testament.

If you translate them back into the Aramaic language, which Jesus no doubt spoke that there's some evidence that Jesus even spoke in poetry. Some of his teachings. He'd certainly be doing so in as part of a long tradition.

The prophets, most of what the prophets wrote is in poetry. The book of Isaiah, the book of Jeremiah and many of the minor prophets. They are primarily written in poetry.

There are some prose sections, but mostly it's poetry. The prophecies were given in poetry. The prophets were poets.

David was a poet. Of course, he's a musician also. So he wrote songs in poetry.

The book of Job and the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes are poetry as well. But they are also what's called wisdom literature. Another kind of genre.

We see that many of the genres of Old Testament inspired writings happen to have been preserved and crafted by the author in poetic form. Now, if we don't understand that, we will misunderstand some things when we read them. Because poetry in Hebrew, just like poetry in English, is very rarely confined to literal statements.

Poetry is written for impressionistic purposes. It's supposed to move the emotions. It's not necessarily informational primarily.

It contains information, but even that information is crafted to be moving to the emotions. That's what poetry is for. That's why there is poetry.

You don't need poetry if you don't want to move the emotions. You probably have some favorite poems in English. I didn't like poetry very much in school, but there are some English poems I've heard and learned in my adult life that I think are very nice.

It's the meter and the rhythm and the rhyme, which are all parts of English poetry, that kind of give it a feel as well as informational content. Hebrew poetry also is intended to give you an experience, an emotional experience, and not just to communicate information. As such, it uses figures of speech.

It uses much non-literal language. It is largely, as I said, to give an impression, an

emotional impression, an emotional experience of what the psalmist is writing or what the prophet is writing about, so that you not only know something about what's on his mind, but you feel something of what he feels. And that's the purpose of poetry.

Now, in Hebrew poetry, one of the most common things in Hebrew poetry is what we call parallelism. We could just call it repetition, repetition of the same idea twice or multiple times. When these repetitions occur, it's not necessarily the case that the second line brings you further along in your information than the first line.

It may be a mere repetition of the same thought, only in different words. Just as the elements of English poetry from our culture, they tend to hit the ear in a certain way, in a pleasurable way, to say something in rhymes is entertaining or pleasurable in some ways. The Hebrew poets did not write in rhyme so much, but they wrote in repetition.

To them, hearing the same thought said two or three different ways in a row, it had an aesthetic appeal to them. And that's what is common in Hebrew poetry, probably more than any other feature of Hebrew poetry. Now, the repetitions are not all of the same type.

Some of them are mere repetition of the same thought, and therefore be a synonymous parallel. Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? You know, the Lord shall look up, he who sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision.

Derision means he derides them, he mocks them. That the Lord sits in heavens and laughs at them, the Lord will have them in derision, he'll deride them, is the same thought twice. Many times, it's exactly the same thought twice.

Other times, it's a related thought that's very similar and not the exact thought, in which case sometimes it gives a little more information or broadens the scope of the first statement, but not very much. It's still essentially the same statement on the same subject. There's also antithetical parallelism.

In the first Psalm, it says, for the Lord, well, at the very end of the first Psalm, as an example, the Lord knows the way of the righteous. But the way of the ungodly shall perish. Okay, so there's two ways.

There's the way of the righteous and God's attitude toward it. And then there's a way of the wicked and God's attitude or dealing with it. Basically, the Lord knows that as he approves of the way of the righteous.

But the way of the wicked, which is the antithesis of the way of the righteous, will perish. Obviously, the same at God's, under God's judgment. So we have the same idea or a similar idea.

You've got one idea in the first line and the opposite in the other. And this is extremely common in the Proverbs, which are also written in poetry. You know, the wise man does this, but the fool does that.

You know, the wise man foresees the evil and hides himself. The fool passes on oblivious and suffers for it. A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up strife.

These are antithetical parallelisms, very common in the Proverbs, common in many of the Psalms too. It's parallelism. It, in a sense, is the same thought from, it's like two sides of the same coin.

One is giving you the head side and the next line gives you the tails. It's really the same coin. It's just saying, you know, for the righteous it's this way, for the unrighteous it's that way.

And they're the exact, you know, polar opposites of each other. And so you've got synonymous parallelism. You've got antithetical parallelism that is kind of the opposite ideas.

You've got parallelism that intensifies something. Sometimes it's parallels, some parallels are like repeated two or three or four times. And the more the same idea is said in a different way, the more it intensifies the idea.

That's the understanding. That's the intention of it at least. And of course sometimes they may clarify it.

Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart, Psalm 73, 1 says. You want to make it clear, he understands when he says to Israel, he's talking about those who have a clean heart. Not just people who are Jewish, but Jews who have a clean heart.

They're the Israel that God is good to. And so the second line can sometimes clarify the meaning of the first. Let me just show you examples of this in the opening Psalms.

We could go through the whole Psalter, but we won't, but we can see it very quickly in the first Psalm. Blessed is the man, and then there's like ideas that are related to each other. Three ideas mentioned here, which are kind of the repetition of the same idea.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. Now there is an intensifying here because there's a standing, there's a sitting, a standing, and a walking. The verbs are different, but the idea is the same.

This person is keeping company with the wrong crowd. Blessed is the man who doesn't do that. The man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of

sinner, sit in the seat of the scornful.

This is a repetition of an idea of what God does not want and what a blessed man does not do. And then verse two, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night. Those ideas are the same.

A person, he delights in the law of the Lord. That's the first idea. He meditates day and night in the law of the Lord.

Of course, you always meditate on the things you delight in. If you're in love with a woman, you think about her all the time. If you're crazy about some sports team, you think about them a lot of the time.

If you like, if you got a new car, you're crazy about, you're delighted in it. You think about it, you talk about it. You know, he delights in the law of the Lord, and in the law of the Lord, he meditates.

Meditates means his mind is on it all the time because he delights in it. It's the same. It's a repetition.

And then it talks about, he's like a tree that's planted by rivers of water. Then there's, there's like three things that are related to each other. Mention next.

It says, he brings forth his fruit in his season. His leaf does not wither. And whatever he does succeeds.

Like a tree that's planted by rivers of water. It doesn't wither up. It bears fruit.

And it's, it's a successful tree. It's a tree that bears fruit, which is what trees are supposed to do. Then he kind of gives the contrast in verse four.

The ungodly are not so. They're like the chaff which the wind drives away. So the ungodly are not like a tree.

That's the first statement. The next one, they are actually like chaff. So it's kind of saying the antithetical thing.

They're not like a tree. They're like chaff. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Now that's an exact synonymous parallelism. The ungodly will not stand in the judgment. Sinners, which is parallel to ungodly, will not stand in the congregation of the righteous.

And it goes on. Then we have the antithetical parallelism in the last verse six. The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

So we have here a variety of examples of parallelism in just Psalm 1 and so with the

other Psalms. Now, not all the verses in all the Psalms have these parallels, but it's the most common feature of the Psalms that sets them apart from non-poetic literature. And it's the most common feature in Hebrew literature.

It's good for us to bear that in mind. Jesus used parallelism too. He said, to what shall we liken the kingdom of God? And what parable can we use to describe it? Just saying the same thing twice.

He said, do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine. Same idea twice. Jesus said, how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. So we've got this parallelism. He says, first of all, it's difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Then his next line is, it's so difficult, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for that. But it's the same information. Maybe an intensification of it in the second case.

So we see this parallelism in the teaching of Jesus as well as you do in the prophets and the Psalms, and certainly the Proverbs a great deal. This is Hebrew poetry. Now in the Psalms and in Proverbs, there's another feature of some poetry.

Not all the poetry has this. This is not a feature that is as universal in Hebrew poetry as parallelism is. But this is a very common thing.

It's what we call acrostic. Now the Hebrew language, the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. And many of the poets, the psalmist and even the writer of Proverbs 31 about the virtuous woman, they like to write a poem that follows the alphabet from the first letter to the last.

So that the first line starts with Aleph, the first letter. The second line begins with Beth, the second letter. The third line with Gimel, which is the third letter in Hebrew and so forth.

You go through the Hebrew alphabet and each successive verse begins with one of the successive letters of the alphabet. I mentioned the famous poem about the virtuous woman in Psalm 31. It's 22 verses long.

It's Psalm 31, 10 through 31, and that's 22 verses. And whenever you see a poem in the Bible, a psalm, that's 22 verses long, almost certainly it's an acrostic. By the way, acrostics are a little more complicated sometimes.

Sometimes a psalm will be 44 verses long. And you can imagine why. They have two verses for each letter of the alphabet.

And once in a while you'll find a psalm that's 66 verses long. And that psalmist has written three verses with the first letter of the alphabet, then three more with the next, and all the way through the alphabet. When you see a psalm or a poetic passage that is written the number of verses in multiples of 22, you're almost always looking at an acrostic.

In fact, if you look over at Lamentations briefly, which is in our canon of Scripture, it's among the books of prophets. It's right after Jeremiah because it is assumed that Jeremiah is the one who wrote it. It's all poetry.

It's a lament. It's a lamenting poem over the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. But what's interesting is chapter 1 of Lamentations has 22 verses.

That's because it's an acrostic. Chapter 2 has 22 verses also. It's also an acrostic poem.

Chapter 3 has 66 verses. It's an acrostic also, but unlike the first two chapters, chapter 3 has three verses for each letter of the alphabet. Chapter 4 has 22 verses again, and chapter 5 has 22 verses again.

So the whole book of Lamentations is like five acrostics. The two at the beginning and the two at the end are one verse per letter of the alphabet. The middle one has three verses per letter of the alphabet.

Now that might not have the impact on your ear that it would have on a Hebrew ear, but to have an acrostic, there's something artistic about it. To be able to write what you want to say and to follow the alphabet like that, poetry is art. It's creative.

It's impressive. When somebody can make a really clever rhyme in a song in English, it makes you feel good like, oh, that rhyme was just right. I would have never thought of that word for that place, but somehow the rhyme is pleasing to our ear.

To them, the creativity of the poet who is able to come up with his ideas and express them following a rigid rule of the existing alphabet, but still be able to write a creative work, that's considered to be artistic. That's supposed to be creative, and it is. By the way, the longest chapter in the Bible, many of you probably know, is Psalm 119.

It is also an acrostic. It has eight verses for each letter of the alphabet, and it's the most obvious acrostic in the Bible because it actually tells you when it changes from one letter to the next. Psalm 119, the first word in Psalm 119 is aleph.

That's the letter A or the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Verses 1 through 8 all begin with that Hebrew letter. After verse 8, it says beth.

That's the next letter, and all the next eight verses begin with beth. Then verse 17, above verse 17, it says gimel, and then the next eight verses follow gimel, and then

daleth, and hey, and the other letters of the alphabet all the way to the end of the alphabet. So it's a very elaborate acrostic, that particular psalm.

But any time a piece of literature like that goes through the alphabet, we'd call that an acrostic, and in the case of Hebrew poetry, it's an acrostic poem, it's an acrostic song. In the book of Psalms, I've given you in your notes a list of the acrostic psalms. Psalm 9, Psalm 10, Psalm 25, Psalm 34, Psalm 37, Psalm 111, Psalm 112, Psalm 119, and Psalm 145.

All of those psalms are acrostics. Again, it's not in all the psalms this way, but it's one of the features that many of the psalms exhibit, and it is part of, it's a poetic device, it's a poetic form. Now there's another more interesting to some people, I'm not as interested in this as some people are, but it takes some real intelligence to sort out these.

How many of you know what a chiasm is, or chiasmus? It's a form of writing where several different points are made in a certain sequence, and then they are all made again in the reverse order, back to the first. So that you've got portions of some of the psalms, and sometimes whole psalms are written in chiasms. By the way, much of the teachings and parables of Jesus are in chiasms, too.

There's a lot of people who have really taken an interest in this, in biblical scholarship, and I know some people who are just fascinated with it. To me, I'm not fascinated with it, partly because some of the people who identify chiasms, it seems kind of, some of the ones they identify seem kind of artificial, and I'm not that persuaded. But even if I were, all that's telling me is that the writer wrote this in an interesting and creative way.

It doesn't give any more information about what he's trying to convey, and I'm kind of cerebral about wanting to know what the Bible's trying to get across. If it's in a chiasm, it's interesting. Again, it's for pleasingness to the ear.

I have given you a second sheet of paper. It's stapled to the first sheet of paper you have, and it's called Example of Chiasm in the Psalms. I'm just going to give you three examples.

Two of them are printed on the paper. One is not. You can turn in your Bible to see this one, though.

Psalm 37. And Psalm 37 has a lot of well-known verses in it, but the first seven verses form a chiasm. I'll read the verses first, and then I'll point out how it works.

Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good.

Dwell in the land and feed on his faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and he

shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord.

Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.

Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Now, that's not the whole psalm, but this section of the psalm is written in a chiasm. First of all, notice the first verse and the last of the section.

Verse 1 and verse 7. This would be the first thought and the last, but they're the same thought, or at least they're related thoughts. The first one is, Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of workers of iniquity. The last one is in verse 7, Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him, and do not fret because of him who prospers in his way.

Both the first and the seventh verse exhort us not to fret over evildoers. Now, as you move toward the center from those two, you've got verse 2. Excuse me, verse, it's maybe verse, yes, verse 2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. So this is what happens to the wicked.

If you move toward the middle from verse 7, you go back to verse 6. It says, He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. Now, this is an antithetical parallel. What is done to the evildoers, they'll soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.

But to the righteous, he'll bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. He'll preserve you and give you blessing. The wicked are going to be cut down and brought to nothing.

As you move toward the center of this chiasm, the next step, verse 3 and verse 5. Verse 3 says, trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and feed on his faithfulness. Verse 5 says, commit your way to the Lord.

Trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. Both those tell us to trust in the Lord. And right in the middle of that chiasm, verse 4, delight yourself also in the Lord and he shall give you the desires of your heart.

Now, this can be illustrated. I can't show it to you because I don't have a, you know, a board or something here to. But the and I haven't given it to you on your notes.

But if you notice on your notes, how verse 40, Psalm 46 and on the other side of the page, Psalm 70 are laid out. Notice there's the structure ABCD in the case of Psalm 46. Then E, then E is report repeated, then D, then C, then B and then A again.

And so looking at Psalm 46, the A at the beginning is God is our refuge and strength. The very present help in trouble. Look at a verse 11.

The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. So he declares God to be the refuge in the first verse and the last verse.

And the central thought is in verse is is the ease. Versus six. Well, verse six has both thoughts.

The nations raged. The kingdoms were moved. He uttered his voice and the earth melted.

So the nations, it tells what they did against God and then what he did against them. That's the central thought of this song. As you move from the middle outward.

OK, verse six is the middle. If you move up to the D in verse four and five, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy place of the tabernacle of the most high.

God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God shall help her just at the break of dawn.

Now, the main idea here is that God is present. God is in the midst of her. If you look down at verse seven, there's the corresponding one at the other side of the chiasm.

The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. So he's with us.

He's present. And then if you move further from the middle to the sea. Up near the top, the sea is even though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Now, this speaks of the threat, the threat, natural threats, floods, you know, earthquakes, things like that. OK, I'm not going to fear.

Even if there's earthquakes and floods and things like that. We'll look at the sea down north near the bottom at first. A come behold the works of the Lord who has made desolations in the earth.

He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two. He burns the chariots in fire.

This is another kind of threat. The threats of war, political threats. The threats of nature and the threats of war are paralleled in this section.

Then notice the B in verse two. Therefore, we will not fear. Look at B at the bottom in verse 10.

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted.

So don't fear. Be still. Now, then, of course, at the at the ends, both ends, the first and the last verse, God is our refuge is there.

So we have the idea developed up into verse six. And then the ideas are repeated in reverse order. The idea, A, is God is a refuge.

B, we won't fear. C, even though there are threats, in this case, natural disasters. E, the nations rage against God, but he speaks and destroys them.

That's the central idea. Then it moves back again, back to, I didn't mention D, I'm sorry, that's where it talks about God is present. And then we have God being mentioned as present again in verse seven.

And then there's the political threats that God overwhelms, which parallel with the natural disasters. And then be still, which parallels will not fear. And then the Lord is our refuge again.

Now, it's kind of hard. Those who may be listening on Facebook and can't see that I don't have the notes I've given out. I'm trying to describe it in such a way that you can almost picture it in your mind if you're not looking at it.

But it helps to be able to look at it. See, that's what it looks like. And if we look at Psalm 70, which is on the other side of those notes, very quickly, this is short Psalm, but it's the chiasm also.

It says, make haste, O God, to deliver me. Make haste to help me, O Lord. Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life.

Let those be turned back and confused who delight in my hurt. Let them be turned back because of their shame who say, aha, aha. Let all those who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

And let those who love your salvation say continually, let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy. Make haste to me, O God.

You are my help and my deliverer, O Lord. Do not delay. Now, the central idea here, which is the D idea, has to do with the people who are delighting in David's hurt.

And he says, let those be turned back and confused who delight in my hurt. There's a parallel statement. Let them be turned back because of the shame who say, aha, aha.

Now, those who say, aha, they are delighting to see him fall into calamity. Aha, he's falling into calamity just as we would have it. And both parts of that verse, he says, let them be turned back.

So those are parallel thoughts. Let them be turned back who take delight in my hurt. Let

them be turned back who say, aha, against me.

But notice the C section in this is in the first case, those who seek my life. And in the bottom C, it's those who seek you. Now, the wicked are seeking David's life.

What's going to happen to them? We'll look at B up at the top. Let them be ashamed and confounded. What about those who seek God? Well, B at the bottom says, let them rejoice and be glad.

They're not going to be confused, ashamed and confounded. They're going to rejoice and be glad. And then the A at the beginning and the end of the Psalm both say, make haste, O God.

In other words, don't delay God. So the Psalm is asking God to hurry up and deliver him. But now I don't know, again, those who can't see the notes may have trouble following this.

And actually, some of you looking at the notes might have trouble with this concept. Because I don't think we use it in English very much. But as you can see, it's used in the Psalms quite a bit.

And I actually, there are people who claim more of this than I see in there. Because I was looking at several examples. I was actually preparing these notes this morning.

And I was looking for examples in literature of the chiasms and the Psalms. And these were actually some of the more obvious ones. These don't look as obvious to me as they think it is.

Well, some of them are much less obvious. And so it's obvious that, what's obvious is that some scholars are finding chiasms everywhere, whether they're there or not. And yet, you can see that this structure is such that it couldn't be accidental.

It's artistic writing. And that's one of the features of the Psalms, of some of the Psalms, as Hebrew poetry. So we're dealing with poetry here.

And by the way, Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and the prophets, insofar as much of their prophecy is written in poetry, have many of these same features. In fact, I just want you to look, if you would, if you have a Bible with you, at any, I'm just going to pick at random, a chapter in Isaiah. Because Isaiah is almost all poetry.

And, like Isaiah 52. If you have the King James Version, this will not appear. Because the King James Version doesn't lay poetry out as poetry.

Modern translations do. Because the translators want you to recognize poetry when it's there. But in Isaiah 52, awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion.

Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. Now, Zion is Jerusalem. Put on your strength, put on your beautiful garments.

This exhortation for Zion or Jerusalem to put on the garment of strength is repeated here. Verse 2 says, shake yourself from the dust, arise, sit down, O Jerusalem, loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Now, O Jerusalem, and O captive daughter of Zion are, of course, parallels.

And he's saying, shake yourself from the dust and arise. And loose yourself from the bonds. These are two different things.

Shake off the, basically, shake off your bondage. You've been sitting in the dust. Shake that dust off.

Shake off your bonds. You're being set free now. And so forth.

And you'll see this as you go through, certainly most of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Minor Prophets tend to be written in poetry. Ezekiel and Daniel, not quite so much. But as we saw, Lamentations, for example, is entirely poetry and made up of several acrostics.

Now, let me talk about the authorship of the Psalms. You figure, well, David wrote the Psalms. Well, he did write a lot of the Psalms.

There are 150 Psalms in our Bible. Seventy-three of them mention David as their author. Now, when I say they mention David, there are Psalm titles on many of the Psalms.

We'll have something to say about those in a moment. But as you as you look at the book of Psalms, you'll find that under the number of the Psalm, in many cases, you'll find in very small print some statements. Sometimes those statements will tell you who the author is.

Sometimes they'll even give you a little bit of historical background or the reason the Psalm was written or the occasion of its being written. For example, if you look at Psalm 7, just as an example. Psalm 7, right under the where it says Psalm 7, there's in very small print, there's a meditation of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush of Benjamite.

Now, we don't know anything about this Cush of Benjamite, but that apparently the words of Cush of Benjamite probably slanders words against David. It's because David heard this slanderous report against him that he wrote this particular Psalm. It talks about, save me from those who persecute me and deliver me, he says in verse 1. So it tells us something about what David was going through.

Not always, but occasionally you have this kind of information given. It also, as I pointed out, that's a Psalm of David. Sometimes they say it's a Psalm of David.

Sometimes it's a Psalm by somebody else. And sometimes there's not even a Psalm title. So a lot of the Psalm titles, I mean a lot of the Psalms don't have titles at all.

The ones that do often tell us who the author of the Psalm was. And 73 out of the 150 Psalms, which is obviously almost half, actually specifically mention in the title that David is the author. Now there are at least two others that we know he wrote.

Although the Psalms don't tell us so, the New Testament tells us so. Because Psalm 2 does not have a Psalm title. So we would not know who wrote it.

Except that in Acts chapter 4 and verse 25, the apostles attribute that Psalm to David. They say David wrote that. Now the book of Psalms doesn't tell us David wrote that, but the apostles tell us that.

So that's another Psalm, that makes 74 that we know David wrote. And then there's also Psalm 95 does not have a Psalm title. We don't know who wrote it, except that the writer of Hebrews, Hebrews 4, 7 quotes it and says that was David also.

So in addition to the 73 Psalms that actually mention David as their author in their titles, there are at least two more, Psalm 2 and Psalm 95, which the New Testament authors tell us David wrote. Now, C.H. Spurgeon, if I understand him correctly, in his monumental work called *The Treasury of David*, which is a three volume commentary on the Psalms that he wrote, as I understand it, he seems to think that David wrote all the Psalms. I'm not quite sure how he concludes that.

Certainly the Bible doesn't give us any reason to believe that David wrote them all, and there's many reasons to believe he did not. For example, at least one Psalm, Psalm 137, was written by an exile in Babylon. Talks about being by the rivers of Babylon where they hung up their harps and their captors wanted them to sing songs for them, and they wouldn't sing because they're in a foreign land.

David doesn't seem like he could have written that unless he's written it by prophetic, you know, insight. He's like putting himself there, but there's no reason to attribute to David. The Bible doesn't say David wrote it, and there's no reason to believe that he wrote all the Psalms.

There are 12 that appear to be by Asaph. Psalm 50 and then 11 other Psalms, Psalm 73 through 83, are all said to be written by Asaph. Now, Asaph was a priest, but he's also called a seer in Scripture.

In 2 Chronicles 29-30, Asaph is referred to as a seer, which is another word for a prophet. So even though David didn't write these 12 songs, they're written by a prophet, and therefore they would qualify as inspired writings. Asaph is the man who wrote those 12.

There's also 12 songs that are said to be written to or for the sons of Korah. Now, that's

an interesting thing because Korah is the man. He was a priest, but he's also a man who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and the earth opened up and swallowed him.

And he died under God's judgment, but his children did not. His children were not with him, and they later became some of the musicians and songwriters for worship during the time of David. And the sons of Korah, therefore, are the writers of 12 of the songs that have them in their titles.

Psalms 42 is one of them. Then Psalms 44 through 49, which is six psalms in a row. Then Psalm 84 and 85, and then Psalm 87 and 88.

These psalms are all written by the sons of Korah, not David, apparently. Now, sometimes they say written for the sons of Korah, or it's not clear if it's for them or by them. It is possible that David could have written psalms that were for the sons of Korah to sing because they're musicians.

But the impression most have is that the sons of Korah actually wrote these psalms. Then there's a miscellaneous authorship of some others. For example, two psalms apparently were written by Solomon or for Solomon.

If they're written for Solomon, David might have written them. But it just says of Solomon. So is it of him that he's the writer of it? Or is it of him that whoever wrote it is writing about Solomon? Perhaps David, Solomon's father.

One of those is Psalm 72, which is a great messianic psalm. And one of those is Psalm 127, which is the one that begins, Unless the Lord builds a house, they labor in vain that build it. Remember Solomon built the temple and it's a song of a psalm of Solomon.

There's one that is a song of Moses. Psalm 90 is attributed to Moses. So it'd be the oldest psalm in the book because Moses was 400 years before David.

And so that that particular psalm is unusual in that it's said to be by most Psalm 90. There are three that are written by Judah, whoever that was. Those are Psalms 39, 62 and 77.

He is mentioned, by the way, in 1 Chronicles 16, 41. Then there's one Psalm by Ethan the Ezrahite. And another one by Heman the Ezrahite.

Ethan and Heman the Ezrahite. Those are Psalms 89 and 88. Now we have these guys names found in 1 Kings 4. Verse 31.

And there they are mentioned in connection with Solomon and his wisdom. Because when the writer 1 Kings 4 is telling us how great the wisdom of Solomon was. The writer says his wisdom exceeded the wisdom of Ethan the Ezrahite or Heman the Ezrahite.

Which are these two men who wrote a psalm each from each of these. But they were apparently also known for their wisdom like Solomon was only he was smarter than they were. At least he was reputed to be smarter than they.

So these are some of the people who wrote some of the Psalms. Now there's different types of Psalms as I mentioned. I want to just run through some of these different types of Psalms for you.

I suppose the most interesting for Christians are the Messianic Psalms. Maybe I should save them for last as more of a climax. But let's just talk about those first because they're the most interesting.

From a Christian point of view. These are Psalms which are quoted in the New Testament generally. Some of them are.

Most of them are. They're quoted by New Testament authors as being about Jesus. Typically they quote the psalm as if it is Jesus speaking.

You will not leave my soul in Hades. Neither will you let your Holy One see destruction. Or corruption.

Psalms 16. I will declare the decree the Lord has said unto me you are my son today I've begotten you. Psalm 2 7. And several other Psalms.

The New Testament quotes as Jesus speaking. The interesting thing is that when you read the Psalms themselves. Without the New Testament commentary it looks like it's David talking about himself.

You could read those Psalms without thinking of the Messiah. But I'd like to remind you. That when Jesus rose from the dead.

That very night he met with his 12 disciples in the upper room. And we read in Luke 24. Verses 44 and 45.

It says that Jesus opened their understanding. That they might understand the Old Testament scriptures. That means that there were things in the Old Testament scriptures that would not be understood without Jesus opening your understanding.

There are things the rabbis would not have necessarily seen. Things that a scholar would not necessarily see. There are things that Jesus knew.

And now the apostles knew. Because he opened their understanding to see them. So when they would quote from the Old Testament.

They were quoting from this knowledge that Jesus had given them. Of what was the actual meaning of these passages. In some cases I believe the rabbis already saw these

Psalms as Messianic.

But in some cases probably not. But if you look at Luke chapter 24. In verse 44 it says.

These Jesus is speaking after his resurrection to the disciples in the upper room. These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you. That all things must be fulfilled.

Which were written in the law of Moses. And the prophets. And the Psalms.

Concerning me. Now Jesus said there were a lot of things written concerning him. In the law.

And in the prophets. And in the Psalms. As it turns out.

Of all the books of the Old Testament. The New Testament writers quoted the Psalms more than any other Old Testament book. When they were identifying Old Testament passages about Jesus.

The second most common quotations book that was quoted was Isaiah. Now you know Isaiah is a prophet about the Messiah. And lots of Isaianic passages are quoted in the New Testament about Jesus.

But not as many as are from the Psalms. The Psalms is a treasure trove of Messianic information. Though that doesn't mean every Jew who reads it would recognize that.

Jesus opened the disciples understanding. So when they quoted from the Psalms. They were quoting from divinely given knowledge.

Of what this was about. And the Psalms that are Messianic that we know about. Are Psalm 2. Psalm 8. Psalm 16.

By the way. Psalm 2 is the one he says. You are my son this day I have begotten you.

Psalm 8 is the one where he says. That what is man that you are mindful of him. Or the son of man.

That you visit him. You've made him a little lower than the angels. And you've crowned him with glory and honor.

The writer of Hebrews quotes that and says. This is what we see. Jesus was made for a little while lower than the angels.

But now he's crowned with glory and honor. So he sees Psalm 8 being fulfilled in Christ. Psalm 16 was quoted by both Peter and Paul.

In their sermons. In Acts 2 and Acts 16. That's where it says you will not leave my soul in

Hades.

Neither will you let your Holy One see corruption. Both Peter and Paul saw that as a reference to the resurrection of Christ. Psalm 22 very famously.

Has a description of the crucifixion. They pierced my hands and my feet. All my bones are out of joint.

My tongue cleaves the roof of my mouth. They cast lots for my vesture. They gamble for my clothes.

You know that's Psalm 22. Psalm 23 is the shepherd's psalm. And Jesus said I am the good shepherd.

David said the Lord is my shepherd. Psalm 24 is about the king of glory coming in to the gates of Jerusalem. That's the Lord.

Psalm 40 is actually quoted in Hebrews. As about Jesus saying sacrifice and offering you did not desire. But a body you have prepared for me.

And Psalm 41 is also a messianic psalm. I don't know. I don't recall if it's quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 45 is another. That is quoted in Hebrews chapter 1 about Christ. Psalm 68, 69, 72, 89, 102, 110, and 118 are all messianic psalms.

Judging by the apostolic witness about them. Now that does mean that every verse in each of these psalms is about the Messiah. Each of these psalms at least have some messianic passage.

But as I said, when you see these passages, it looks like it's David talking about himself. It doesn't look like it's the Messiah being talked about. And the way the New Testament writers understood this is that David is a type of Christ.

David is a foreshadowing of Christ. David's life paralleled the life of Christ in many respects, important respects. And because of the promises made to David that the Messiah would be like him.

Many things that David said about himself are applicable to the Messiah. And the New Testament writers saw a double meaning. It was true of David, but it's also true of the second David, the Messiah, the second anointed one.

David was anointed to be king. And his seed, someone from his line was promised to be the Messiah. And so David is the type of the Messiah.

And David speaks, perhaps not even knowing that he's speaking in the person of

Messiah. He's speaking of himself because what he says is true of himself. But also it's true of the Messiah.

I just want to say that of those many psalms that are messianic, there are four of them that are called the great kingdom psalms. They are talking about the reign of the Messiah. And depending on one's eschatology, they are either seen as talking about the millennium or about the church age.

Because, as you may know, pre-millennialists believe that this kingdom awaits the second coming of Christ will be a millennial kingdom that Jesus will establish when he comes. Others believe that it was the first coming of Christ that established the kingdom and we're living in that age. Now, the apostles took the second view.

The apostles, whenever they quoted any of these kingdom psalms, they applied them to the present, to their own time. So there are differences of opinion about that. But if we consult the apostles, the kingdom psalms actually apply to the present age where Christ is in throne at the right hand of God, the father.

And he's never going to be demoted from that throne. He's going to reign forever there. And so those psalms, I should let you know, are Psalm 2, Psalm 45, Psalm 72, and Psalm 110.

Now, Psalm 110 is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other chapter in the Old Testament. Psalm 110, that's where it says, My Lord said to my Lord, that is, Yahweh said to my Lord, the Messiah, sit at my right hand and tell me your enemy is your footstool. That is quoted or alluded to very frequently in the New Testament.

And then verse four of the same Psalm, Psalm 110, verse four, you are a priest forever after the order of Belkezik is also quoted numerous times in the book of Hebrews. So Psalm 110 is quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament chapter is. But it's one of the four great Psalms of the kingdom.

Now, of those four, three of them are quoted in the New Testament. Psalm 72 is not. But Psalm 2 is, Psalm 45 is, and Psalm 110 is frequently.

And these are talking about the Messiah's kingdom. As you read the Messianic Psalms, you'll find various names for the Messiah. He's referred to as, first of all, the Messiah, which means the anointed one.

The one that has oil poured over him as an installation to be the ruler. The anointed one in Psalm 2, 2. He's called the king. In Psalm 2, 6 and in Psalm 45, 1. He's called the priest after the order of Melchizedek.

In Psalm 110, in verse four. He's called the rejected stone, the stone which the builders rejected. In Psalm 118, verse 22.

He's called God. In Psalm 45, 6, where God speaks to the Messiah and says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. He's called David's Lord in Psalm 110, verse 1. Jesus quoted it and made a big point about that.

He's called the son. S-O-N in Psalm 2, 7. You are my son, this I begot you. He's also called the firstborn in Psalm 89, verse 27.

These are titles for the Messiah, most of which appear, of course, in the New Testament also. That are found in these various Messianic Psalms. And I want to make one more point, then we're going to take a break.

And then we're going to come back for a second part. If you want to come back, you can also, there's a door right there. You can leave if you don't want to come back.

But we're going to finish this up after a short break. About these Messianic Psalms. We find that they focus either upon the humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah.

Some of them only on the humiliation. Some only on the exaltation. Some, perhaps, both.

And then they also talk about the influence of the Messiah on the whole world. His blessing on all the nations. This is, again, one of the themes of the Messianic Psalms.

That not only the Jews, but the Gentiles also are going to benefit from Him.