

Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a collection of sacred poems that record the inspired responses of the pious to the full gamut of human experiences, relating them to the variegated character and working of God within the context of His covenant relationship with His people. These responses then serve as models for personal reflection and public, corporate worship. As such they have been a most cherished possession of the people of God down through the centuries, for in them there is evidenced every genuine emotion of the human soul as it is moved to give praise and worship to God.

Authorship

Many of the Psalms have names attached to them in the “superscriptions.” These have traditionally been taken as indicating authorship. The names include David (73 times), Asaph (12), the sons of Korah (11), Solomon (2), Heman (1), Etan (1), and Moses (1). Modern scholarship has challenged this as indication of authorship on the bases of comparison with Greek and Latin versions (which have even more superscription names), the wide semantic range of the Hebrew preposition לְ (which can mean “by,” “of,” “about,” or “for”), and certain views about the development of Hebrew religion (contending that such elegant expression of piety could not have taken place as early as David’s time).¹ Such arguments do not conclusively demonstrate that these are not indications of authorship. Good arguments for understanding the לְ as indicating authorship can be made, especially in light of Psalm 18:1.² However, authorship is not a necessary criteria for canonicity nor interpretation.

Date

If the authorial information contained in the superscriptions be accepted, then the Psalms span a time of composition from Moses (1445 B.C.) to Ezra (c. 400 B.C.), or about 1000 years. There is no question that this type of material was being written in the culture at large over this whole period, despite the objections of a past generation of biblical critics who espoused a kind of evolutionary view of the development of religion and culture. Since the Psalms were written over such a long period of time it is obvious that their collection and

¹ See Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 215-17.

² The New Testament confirms Davidic authorship of a number of Psalms; see Matt 22:43; Acts 1:16; 2:25, 34; 4:25 Rom. 4:6.

arrangement was a dynamic process. Though evidence of this process may be detected, the exact method and time sequence cannot be ascertained.

Historical Setting

Since the Psalms begin with Moses and end with the post-exilic community it may be said that their historical background is the history of the nation of Israel from its inception to its reestablishment in the land following the Babylonian exile.

Original Readers

From the notices in the superscriptions it is obvious that much of the Psalter is designed for public “performance” whereby the psalmist draws attention to Yahweh’s person and work as he has personally experienced it. Therefore, the original hearers of these psalms would have been those associated with the formal worship of Israel, mostly in the context of the temple. The many musical and performance indications in the superscriptions bear this out. The fact that the psalms are so “generic” with respect to historical and personal details indicates that the compositional intent went beyond the first worship participants. The Psalms were designed to draw the hearer into the psalmist’s experience and to give him or her a form to follow for similar expressions of trust and worship in the future.

Occasion

In view of the compositional intent, as stated above in connection with the original readers, the psalms are occasioned by the variety of circumstances in which an individual or the nation experienced personal difficulties and divine assistance. In many cases it is stated that a given composition is being offered as fulfillment of a vow to praise Yahweh for some specific act of deliverance. Other psalms give indication of the practice of composing songs appropriate for the worship of Yahweh in general. Whatever the case, it is clear that they were intended for public “consumption” and were not merely the private devotions of the pious, later unearthed and made public.

Special Issues

Superscriptions. A great number of psalms have superscriptions (incorporated as verse 1 or verses 1 & 2 in the Hebrew text). They variously contain information about the historical situation underlying the psalm, the author, the setting, and performance instructions. The issue with these notations is whether they were part of the original composition or were added later as the collection grew and was adapted to the nation’s worship needs. Scholarly opinion ranges from recognition in whole as part of the inspired text to complete dismissal as later speculation

or contextual adaptation. A typical mediating position is that these “titles are not original, but early; not canonical, but reliable.”³ Since not all of the Psalms have titles it is safe to say that their inclusion or exclusion is not absolutely critical to a particular Psalm’s interpretation. However, since there is insufficient evidence to dismiss the superscriptions as late and uninformed additions, it is best to consider them as giving genuine information about that Psalm’s origination and/or use, whether or not the interpreter can completely decipher its parts. For example, when Psalm 34 begins by describing a situation in which David feared for his life, it may be assumed that the psalm’s instruction about overcoming fear is an answer to his specific case, serving as an illustration of how the worshipper may approach other such threatening situations. When the information in the superscription can be deciphered, it is proper to consider it in the interpretation and application of that particular Psalm.

The *Sitz im Leben* of a Psalm and its Intepretation. Many of the Psalms give historical background associated either with its composition or with its intended use. For example, many of David’s psalms specify some event that serves as the background or precipitating event occasioning his response (cf. Pss 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142). Some scholars have tried to reconstruct the historical background behind all the psalms, as though this were the primary key to their interpretation and use. Since most of the Psalms are without historical background it must be assumed that the exact historical incident occasioning the poem is not of critical importance. Rather, the Psalter should be viewed as Israel’s hymnbook—a primer of confession, praise, and worship whereby the worshipper may offer to the Lord an appropriate response to the various situations and exigencies of life as they are generally, and generically, portrayed in these inspired offerings. Only by veiling the actual setting of the Psalm can their applicational intent be fully realized. The fact that some do have historical roots, serves to validate their authenticity and real life implications. Therefore, when historical details are given they should be accepted as genuine indication of the Psalm’s generative context. When such information is lacking, the Psalm must be analyzed on the basis of its content, as supplemented by what may be known of its general type and cultic setting (e.g., the Davidic covenant’s role in the role of the king or the Songs of Ascent against the background of the city of Jerusalem and the temple).

³ Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, 219.

The problem of imprecation in the Psalms. It is felt by many that the frequent invocation of curses upon one's enemy is not worthy of God's lofty character, and certainly goes against the New Testament ethic of love and forgiveness.⁴ However, there are two things that mitigate this criticism. First, the psalmist is not calling for personal revenge but rather for God to vindicate Himself as the righteous Judge of all the earth. Ultimately the wicked are answerable to God alone, who will one day take vengeance upon all ungodliness (cf. 2 Thess 1:8). Secondly, when David and his royal descendants are the objects of abuse and mistreatment by the wicked, it is a direct affront to the Lord and His desire to manifest Himself to the nations through the nation Israel. Since Old Testament manner of mission involved a geo-political instrument (Israel as a nation), vindication of said instrument often necessitated an immediate act of judgment. During the present dispensation the people of God are not organized into a geo-political entity, thus taking away the necessity for immediate judgment of its enemies. Furthermore, the book of Revelation makes it clear that one day the Lord Jesus Christ will take vengeance upon the wicked and will, thus, Himself carry out the ultimate imprecation (cf. Rev 6:10; 16:5-6; 19:2).⁵

Messianic interpretation of the Psalms. Without question the New Testament writers (in agreement with then current Rabbinic interpretation) understood many and diverse passages of the Psalms as applying to the advent of Messiah. The question with respect to the interpretation and application of the Psalms themselves is how to understand the intent of such passages in their original casting. Must a Psalm (or messianic allusion/reference within a Psalm) be speaking solely of Messiah in order to be understood as messianic or may certain facts be true of the ultimate Descendant, Jesus Christ as well as a given historical king in the line of David? Some references to the future Messiah are obvious and inescapable (e.g. Ps 110); others seem to admit of a multiple referent (Ps 2) while yet other passages seem to have no obvious allusion to Messiah except in the understanding of the inspired New Testament writer (e.g. Ps 34:20). The totality of revelation is the final control for the interpretation of the Psalms messianically. On the basis of the general pattern of the expectation of the advent of David's royal son, along with the specific, inspired messianic identifications of New Testament writers, the modern exegete is

⁴ See, for example, 3:7; 5:10; 7:6-9; 28:4; 31:17-18; 35:26; 54:5; 58:6-8; 109:6-20; 140:7-11.

⁵ For a discussion of imprecations in the Psalms see Robert B Chisholm, "A Theology of the Psalms," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, edited by Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 278-84.

allowed to trace the various threads of the messianic tapestry, thus gaining a deep appreciation of His exalted place in God's plan of the ages.

Theme Statement

God is worthy of mankind's worship and has provided the pattern for a respectful yet exuberant approach, no matter what the circumstance, both privately and corporately, for King and commoner alike.

General Structure

The Psalter is formally arranged into books that, while having some distinctive features, lack any strict categorical requirements. The five sections of the Psalms are 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; and 107-150. Though it is clear that an (divinely directed) editorial process has grouped the Psalms in this way, it is necessary to analyze each poem individually in order to discern and apply its message.

Generally the Psalms arise out of some exigency or delight of life and contain the divinely informed response of the psalmist to that particular situation. The collection contains various kinds of subject matter that often follow recognizable forms of expression. These forms, where they are plainly detectable, are helpful in analyzing the message of a Psalm. By noting examples of form categories most of the Psalter can be identified as to content and usage, thus aiding the reader in utilizing the Psalms as a primer of godly response to life's greatest demands and highest joys. The Psalms may be analyzed by form and/or content as an aid to interpreting the Psalter. Those categorized primarily by form are Personal Lament (Complaint), Community Lament, Declarative Praise Song of the Individual (Thanksgiving Songs), and Descriptive Praise Songs (Hymns). Those classified by content are Victory Songs, Processional (Pilgrim) Songs, Songs of Zion, Enthronement Songs (all types of Hymns or Declarative Praise Songs); Royal Psalms, and Wisdom Songs. In addition many of the Psalms have a Messianic content.

Types of Psalms⁶

Type of Psalm: ***Personal Lament***

The Parts

These are the usual components of the personal lament, not always in this precise form (the associated letter will be used to identify that element in the accompanying Psalm example): (A) An introductory cry for help or appeal in the form of an address to God, (B) the complaint (lament) itself, (C) a confession of trust, sometimes quite long, (D) a petition, sometimes two, frequently with reasons for expecting a divine response, and (E) a vow of praise (to be rendered upon God's answer) or declarative praise actually given in confident anticipation of deliverance.

Psalm 13: The Cry of the Afflicted

Theme Statement: Though the psalmist finds no deliverance from the oppression of his adversary, he rests confidently in Yahweh's loyal love.

Structure:

	<u>Form</u>
I. David Prays to Yahweh (1-4)	
A. David laments his predicament (1,2)	
1. Yahweh has apparently ignored and forgotten him (1)	A
2. He is frustrated over his own attempts at escape (2a,b)	
3. His enemy is exalted over him (2c)	B
B. David petitions Yahweh to give attention to his predicament (3-4)	D
1. He needs Yahweh's attention and enlightenment (3a,b)	
2. Otherwise his enemy will kill him and boast over his demise (3b-4)	
C. David expresses confidence in Yahweh's loyal love (5a)	C
II. David resolves to praise Yahweh, assured that his prayer has been heard (5b-6)	E

⁶ The structural analysis presented here is based largely on Bruce K. Waltke, "Notes on the Book of Psalms" (unpublished class notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.), 1-52 and Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985), 779-899; Allen P. Ross, "The Book of Psalms," (unpublished notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.), 1-164.

Other Personal Lament Psalms

This is the largest single category of Psalms. Other examples include Psalms 5–7, 12, 17, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54, 55, 57, 59, 61, 64, 69, 70, 71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 142, and 143.

Type of Psalm: **National Lament**

The Parts

These Psalms contain the same components as Individual Lament Psalms but are generally shorter. They include (A) an introductory address and petition, (B) the lament, (C) a confession of trust, the main petition (Dmp) with motivation to answer (Dma), and (E) a vow of praise.

Psalm 74: Complaint over the Devastation of the Sanctuary

Theme Statement: Asaph calls on God to remember His people, lamenting the destruction of the sanctuary by the enemy, and prays that God would not permit this reproach since he had destroyed His enemies in the past.

Structure:

- | | <i>Form</i> |
|---|--------------------|
| I. Asaph utters his complaint to God that He not forget His people and Zion (1-3) | A |
| A. He pleads with God not to continue in anger against His flock (1) | |
| B. He calls on God to remember His redeemed people (2) | |
| C. He calls on God to rescue Zion from the devastation of the enemy (2b-3) | |
| II. Asaph laments the enemy's destruction of the sanctuary and threat to the Nation (4-9) | B |
| A. The sanctuary has been overrun and torn down (4-6) | |
| B. The worship of God is threatened (7-8) | |
| C. There is no prophet to give encouragement (9) | |
| III. Asaph appeals to God to overturn the reproach of the enemy reminding Him of His past deliverances through nature (10-17) | D |
| A. He appeals to God by asking "How long?" (10,11) | Dmp |
| B. He seeks to motivate God by reminding Him of past help (12-17) | Dma |
| IV. Asaph appeals to God to protect the afflicted because of His covenant (18-23) <i>Dma</i> (18) | |
| A. He asks God to not forsake His people but remember His covenant (19-21) | |
| B. He calls God to action because the enemies have risen against Him (22-23) | |

Other National Lament Psalms:

Other prayers by the congregation in times of national crisis are 44, 60, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, and 126.

Type of Psalm: ***Declarative Praise Psalm of the Individual***The Parts

In these Psalms the psalmist has previously made a vow to praise and is now going to fulfill it. Hence, the components of these thanksgiving songs are (A) the resolve to give thanks, (B) an introductory summary statement, (C) recollection of the time of need and deliverance, (D) renewed vow of praise, and (E) descriptive praise and/or instruction.

Psalm 34: “Praise for Deliverance from Fear with Instruction in the Fear of the Lord”

Theme Statement: Having called the congregation to praise Yahweh, the psalmist reports his deliverance from what he had feared and instructs the congregation in the fear of the Lord so that they too might experience His protection and blessing.

Structure:

	<i>Form</i>
I. David proclaims his intention to praise Yahweh, calling on others to join Him (1-3)	A
A. He resolves to praise Yahweh for the sake of the humble (1,2)	
B. He encourages the congregation to extol Yahweh together with him (3)	
II. David reports his deliverance (4-6)	B
A. He summarizes his deliverance (4)	
B. He recounts the congregations response (5)	C
C. He restates his report of deliverance (6)	C
III. David offers descriptive praise to Yahweh (7-10)	E
A. He praises Yahweh for His protection (7-8)	
B. He praises Yahweh for His provision (9-10)	
IV. David instructs in the fear of the Lord. (11-22)	E
A. He invites the congregation to learn (11-12)	
B. He encourages good words and works (13-14)	
C. He contrasts the righteous and the wicked (15-22)	

Other Declarative Praise Psalms of the Individual

Compare: 18, 30, 32, 40, 66, 106, 116, and 138.

Type of Psalm: ***Descriptive Praise Psalm of the Individual***

The Parts

These hymns of worship frequently contain three elements: (A) the call to praise, sometimes with the prologue “Hallelujah,” (B) the cause for praise, including a summary statement, Yahweh’s characteristics of greatness and grace, with specific illustrations, and (C) the conclusion including things like a renewed call to praise, an exhortation, or petition.

Psalm 33: Praise from the Upright is Beautiful

Theme Statement: The psalmist calls upon the righteous to praise Yahweh because He can be trusted to deliver and protect His own.

Structure:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| | <u>Form</u> |
| I. The psalmist calls upon the righteous to praise Yahweh with music (1-3) | A |
| II. The psalmist gives the cause for praise (4-19) | B |
| A. He summarizes his reasons for praise (4-5) | |
| 1. His greatness: His word and work are dependable (4) | |
| 2. His grace: Yahweh is righteous, just and loyal. (5) | |
| B. He expands upon Yahweh’s greatness (6-12) | |
| 1. Creation demonstrates the dependability of His word (6-9) | |
| 2. History demonstrates the dependability of His work (10-12) | |
| C. He expands upon Yahweh’s grace (13-19) | |
| 1. He knows all people (13-15) | |
| 2. He does not deliver the self-sufficient (16-17) | |
| 3. He does deliver those look to Him (18-19) | |
| III. The psalmist concludes by reasserting faith in Yahweh (20-22) | C |

Other Descriptive Praise Psalms of the Individual

Other Psalms of this type are 33, 36, 105, 111, 113, 117, 135, 136, 146, and 147.

Other Kinds of Descriptive Praise Psalms or Hymns

Some identify a number of subcategories of hymns of praise clustered around special events including victory songs, processional hymns (pilgrim songs), songs of Zion, and enthronement songs.⁷ These categories are established by content rather than form.

Type of Psalm: **Enthronement Psalms**

Unifying Feature

The phrase “Yahweh reigns” marks this type of Psalm. Various interpretations have been suggested for this phrase including (1) reference to an annual enthronement festival celebrating Yahweh’s rule over the earth (2) as speaking of God’s universal reign (3) as referring to Yahweh’s historical reign over Israel and (4) as looking forward to the millennial reign of Christ (the most probable interpretation).

Psalm 47: Celebrating the Rule of the Great King

Theme Statement: The psalmist calls for celebration over Israel’s sovereign and holy King who has taken up His reign over the nations.

Outline:

- I. The psalmist calls for celebration because Yahweh, Israel’s King, subdues the nations in exalting His people (1-4)
 - A. The Call to Celebration (1)
 - B. The Cause for Celebration (2-4)
 1. Yahweh is King over all the earth (2)
 2. Yahweh will subdue the nations (3)
 3. Yahweh will choose Israel’s inheritance (4)
- II. The psalmist calls for praise of Yahweh because He takes up His reign (5-9)
 - A. Yahweh ascends His throne amidst acclamation (5)
 - B. Praise is enjoined because Yahweh is King over all the earth (6-7)
 - C. Yahweh reigns in His holiness (8)
 - D. All peoples are gathered around the throne of the powerful God (9)

Other Enthronement Psalms

Other psalms celebrating the reign of the Lord as the sovereign of the nations are 93, and 96–99.

⁷ See Leslie C. Allen, “Psalms,” *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed., William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Busch, eds. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 434-35.

Type of Psalm: **Pilgrim Psalms**

Unifying Feature

Pilgrim songs, or processional hymns, “describe the longings and expectations of pilgrims and worshippers as they approach the temple.”⁸ **Psalm 84** proclaims the blessedness of the man who in faith makes his pilgrimage to Zion to offer up his petition to Yahweh for Israel’s king. **Psalm 121** expresses the pilgrim’s assurance that Yahweh will protect him on his journey to Jerusalem as he trusts in Him. In **Psalm 122** the psalmist, upon recalling his pilgrimage to Jerusalem calls other pilgrims to pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem.

Psalm 122: Joy over visiting the House of the Lord

Theme Statement: As the psalmist joyfully recalls his visit to Jerusalem and the house of God he calls for prayer for the city’s peace since that will protect Yahweh’s house and thereby prosper all those who align themselves with the king.

Outline:

- I. The psalmist joyfully recalls his pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1-2)
 - A. He recounts his joy at the invitation to visit the house of the Lord (1)
 - B. He remembers his visit to Jerusalem (2)
- II. The psalmist extols Jerusalem as the Israel’s capitol (3-5)
 - A. He extols the city for its physical structure (3)
 - B. He extols the city as the center of Israel’s worship (4)
 - C. He extols the city as seat of David’s government (5)
- III. The Psalmist calls for prayer for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem (6-9)
 - A. Those who show their love for Jerusalem by praying for her peace will be prospered (6)
 - B. Those who are companions to the king will be prospered by the peace of Jerusalem (7-8)
 - C. The psalmist will seek the good of Jerusalem because Yahweh’s house is there (9)

Other pilgrim songs include Psalms 120–134. These songs are generally marked by the phrase “A Song of Ascents” in the superscription.

⁸ Ibid., 434.

Type of Psalm: **Royal Psalms**

These psalms are classified by content. They focus on the Davidic king in his rule and also cultivate expectation of the messianic son of David, especially after the exile. From the content of these psalms clues to the occasions when they may have been used may be found. These occasions could include weddings (Psa 45), royal celebrations (such as coronations and anniversaries of royal accession—Psalms 2; 21; 72; 110), and prayers before or after battle (Ps 20).⁹ These psalms view the king as reigning by God’s authority and, therefore, celebrate His present control as well as the ultimate establishment of His rule on earth. In light of the exile this type of Psalm would be focused on the restoration of David’s royal dynasty, which thus took on more direct Messianic overtones. Psalms that treat this subject include 2, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, and 110.

Psalm 89: A Song of Yahweh’s Covenant Faithfulness

Theme Statement : Because God had made an eternal covenant with David, the psalmist asks the Lord to overturn the present misfortunes of the Davidic descendant on the basis of the Sovereign’s demonstrated loyalty to His covenant promises.

Outline:

- I. The psalmist vows to praise Yahweh for His covenant with David (1-4)
 - A. He will sing to Yahweh for His faithfulness and loyalty (1,2)
 - B. He recalls Yahweh’s promise to David of an eternal seed and throne (3, 4)
- II. The psalmist praises Yahweh for the greatness of His person and works (5-18)
 - A. Yahweh will be praised by heaven and earth (5)
 - B. Yahweh is to be praised for His attributes (6-8)
 1. He is incomparable to the universe (6)
 2. He is to be awed by believers (7)
 3. He is the God of armies (8)
 - C. Yahweh’s great works are described (9-14)
 1. He rules over the chaos of the sea (9-10)
 2. He possesses heaven and earth (11)
 3. He has created the mountains (12)
 4. He does all things truthfully and faithfully (13-14)
 - D. Those who trust Yahweh are blessed (15-18)
- III. The psalmist rehearses the promises of the Davidic covenant (19-37)

⁹ Ibid., 439.

- A. David was chosen as the anointed servant (19-20)
 - B. David was promised protection and success (21-23)
 - 1. He would enjoy Yahweh's strength (21)
 - 2. He would enjoy victory over his enemies (22-23)
 - C. David was granted a special relationship with Yahweh (24-29)
 - 1. He enjoyed Yahweh's faithfulness and loyalty (24)
 - 2. He was elevated by Yahweh (25)
 - 3. He enjoyed a father-son relationship with Yahweh (26-27)
 - 4. He enjoyed an eternal covenant with Yahweh (28-29)
 - D. David's covenant promises will stand regardless of his descendants' failures (30-37)
 - 1. His descendants will be disciplined for failure (30-32)
 - 2. Yahweh's promises will not be broken (33-37)
- IV. The psalmist prays for a reversal of the misfortune of David's descendants (38-52)
- A. He laments the defeat of the king (38-45)
 - B. He pleads for Yahweh to come to the aid of the king on the basis of His covenant with David (46-51)
 - C. He expresses confidence in Yahweh's response (52)

Type of Psalm: **Messianic Psalms**

Certain psalms refer to the Messiah, who would come to finally establish Yahweh's rule on earth. These psalms may allude to the Messiah in only one statement or they may be entirely devoted to His person and/or work. Jesus made it clear that the Psalms spoke of Himself (Luke 24:44). Sometimes the information about Messiah given in the psalms is more detailed than what is found in the Gospels (for example His thoughts on the cross—cf. Ps 22). The following Psalms refer in some way to Jesus Christ: 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 72, 89, 96, 110.

Psalm 110: Reign of the Priest-King

Theme Statement: David prophetically announces a time when Messiah will be enthroned at Yahweh's right hand as a King-priest awaiting the time of final victory over His enemies.

Outline:

- I. David reports Yahweh's exaltation of his Lord (1-2)
 - A. David's Lord is seated at Yahweh's right hand until his enemies are defeated (1)
 - B. Yahweh will send Messiah to rule in strength (2)
- II. David describes Messiah's rule with His people (3-4)

- A. Messiah's people will be arrayed in holiness (3)
- B. Messiah will rule as a priest after the order of Melchizedek (4)
- III. David describes Messiah's victory over His enemies in the coming battle (5-7)
 - A. Yahweh will give power for Messiah's victory (5)
 - B. Messiah will judge all the nations in great power (6)
 - C. Messiah will be sustained for His task (7)

Psalm 2: God's Son-King will Rule the Earth

Theme Statement: Since Yahweh has ordained His Son-King to rule the earth, nations should cease their futile rebellion and submit to the Son.

- I. The psalmist asks, rhetorically, why the nations rebel against Yahweh and His anointed (1-3)
 - A. He asks why the peoples of the nations devise futile plots of rebellion (1)
 - B. He asks why earthly kings join together in rebellious plots (2-3)
- II. The psalmist reports Yahweh's response to the nations' rebellion (4-6)
 - A. He shall laugh and hold them in derision (4)
 - B. He shall declare to them that His King has already been installed (5-6)
- III. The psalmist reports the Son-King's response to the nations' rebellion (7-9)
 - A. He recalls Yahweh's decree adopting Him as Son-King (7)
 - B. He recalls Yahweh's instruction to ask for His rightful inheritance (8)
 - C. He recalls Yahweh's assurance that He will break the rebellion (9)
- IV. The psalmist relays wise counsel to the nations in rebellion (10-12)
 - A. They ought to serve Yahweh in holy awe (10-11)
 - B. They ought to submit to the Son-King in fear of judgment (12)

Type of Psalm: Wisdom/Didactic Psalms

There are a number of Psalms that use the language and style of books like Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These psalms reflect the literary techniques used in much of Proverbs (like acrostics, comparisons, and admonitions), have an obvious intent of teaching by direct instruction, and contain themes found in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (things like contrasts between the righteous and wicked, speech, work, and the use of wealth).¹⁰ Psalm 34 (outlined above under the Declarative type of psalm) contains a section of wisdom teaching (vv. 11-22). Other psalms that contain wisdom type instruction are 1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 440.

Psalm 1: Blessedness of the Righteous

Theme Statement: The way of the righteous will be blessed because he looks to Yahweh for direction and thereby experiences His prospering.

- I. The righteous will be blessed because he resorts to Yahweh's law (1-3)
 - A. He does not follow the way of the ungodly scoffer (1)
 - B. He delights in Torah (2)
 - C. He displays personal fruitfulness (3)
- II. The ungodly, by contrast, will not succeed (4-5)
 - A. They are unstable in their ability to persevere (4)
 - B. They are culpable in the face of divine judgment (5)
- III. The righteous will endure while the ungodly will perish (6)

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