

Biblical Interpretation

Old Testament Poetry

Biblical Interpretation—Old Testament Poetry

Interpreting the Psalms

I. Stylistic Features of Poetry (cf. Bennie Wolvaardt, *How to Interpret the Bible—A Do-It-Yourself Manual*, pp. 129-136; see also my *Hermeneutics*, “*Special Literary Methods*”, pp. 38-41, for a further explanation of parallelism in the psalms.

A. Repetition

Psalm 15 (NIV)

LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?

inclusion

² He **whose** walk is blameless
and **who** does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from his heart
³ and has no slander on his tongue,
who does his neighbor no wrong
and casts no slur on his fellowman,
⁴ **who** despises a vile man
but honors those who fear the LORD,
who keeps his oath even when it hurts,
⁵ **who** lends his money without usury
and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

Who is repeated as well as the answer to the original question, **Who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?** The answers are found in vv. 2, 3, 4, and 5a which use **who** repetitively. Notice that v. 1 and 5b are parallel and form an *inclusion* bracketing verses 2-5a.

The psalms express God’s covenant law. Notice the different references to the law (vv. 2b, 3; cf. Ex. 20: 16; Lev. 19: 16); the case law against charging interest to the poor (v. 5a; cf. Ex. 22: 25); the law against bribery in the courts (v. 5b; cf. Deut. 16: 19; Deut. 27: 25), the keeping of oaths (Num. 30: 2).

In any discourse, the purpose of *repetition* is *emphasis*. The psalmist wishes to emphasize the importance of obedience in receiving the covenant blessings. However, he is not teaching salvation by works (cf. Matt. 7: 21).

He **who** does these things
will never be shaken. (Psalm 15:1-5 NIV)

inclusion

Psalm 29 (NIV)

¹ Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones,
ascribe to the LORD **glory and strength**.
² Ascribe to the LORD **the glory due his name**;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.
³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.
⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.
⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.
⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
⁹ The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.

Glory and strength and the glory due his name carries the phrase, **ascribe to the Lord**, further than the first line in v. 1

This is also an example of *climactic parallelism* or *staircase parallelism* (see p. 134 in Wolvaardt). The parallel “begins with a statement in the first phrase which is partially repeated in the second but carried further than it would be in synonymous parallelism” (Tremper Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*, p. 101, who uses this psalm as an example).

And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;

the LORD is enthroned as King forever.

¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people;

the LORD blesses his people with peace. (Psalm 29:1-11 NIV)

Other psalms with repetition: Psalm 150; Ps. 136; Ps. 135

B. Parallelism

1. Similar (Synonymous) Parallelism—the thought or expression of the first line is repeated by the second line using different words.

Psalm 8 (NIV) For the director of music. According to *gittith*. A psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord, I
how majestic is your name
in all the earth! //

Verse 1a and v. 9 form an **inclusion** which forms a bracket [] around vv. 1b-8. An inclusion sets the mood for the entire poem at the beginning and gives the reader a sense of closure at the end (Tremper Longman, III, *How to Read the Psalms*, p. 107). Thus, the inclusion serves as the **introduction** and the **conclusion** to the psalm. Beginning in 1b and continuing through v. 8, psalmist gives examples of the majesty of the Lord. The **name** of the Lord is synonymous with His being.

You have set ***your glory***
above the heavens.

God's **glory** is also synonymous with His **name**. The **earth** and the **heavens** are synonymous with the sphere or location of God's glory—everywhere.

² From the lips of **children and infants** you have ordained **praise** because of **your enemies**, to **silence** the foe and the avenger.

Children and infants are antithetically parallel to **your enemies**. The **praise** of children and infants is antithetically parallel to the **silence** of **the foe and the avenger**. The **antithesis** presented here is an expression of the antithesis between the **seed** of the woman and the seed of the serpent in Gen. 3: 15 (cf. Matt. 21: 16; also see my *Hermeneutics, IV. Interpreting the Psalms B. Strategy for Interpreting the Psalms 2. Understand the theology of the psalms*

³ When I consider your **heavens**,

the work of your **fingers**,
 the **moon and the stars**,
 which you have **set in place**,

The **heavens** is parallel to **the moon and stars** which exist in the heavens. **The work of your fingers** is parallel to the activity of **setting the moon and the stars in place**, as if God took the moon and stars and hung them in the heavens with His hands. Notice that the parallelism is expressed by different font styles. The student can use indicator symbols. What is theologically interesting about this verse? This brings up the subject of **anthropomorphism (ascribing to God a human characteristic)**.

⁴ what is MAN c
 that you are *mindful of him*, d
 the SON OF MAN c
 that you *care for him?* d

In the third line, the question, **what is** is implied, so the line could read, **what is the son of man?** This is called an *ellipsis* and serves to bind two lines (and thoughts) more closely together for emphasis. Being **mindful** of man—having man on His mind—is the same as caring for Him. Man is the image of God; consequently, God has man continually on His mind.

⁵ You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings e
 and *crowned him with glory and honor.* f

These two verses express man’s unique **ontological** (being) status as the **crown** of creation as well as his unique role as God’s vice-regent (ruler with God but under God). In ancient times, the footstool of the king would have the names of conquered enemies written on the footstool **under his feet** (Ps. 110: 1)

⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; e

you put everything under his feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds, f
 and the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air,
 and the fish of the sea,
 all that swim the paths of the seas.

Developing parallelism which extends the idea of **everything under his feet**. (see explanation below)

Possible sermon: **Main Idea**—God created man for the purpose of ruling the world under His authority.
 Question: How did God do this?
I. He created man in His own image a little lower than the angels (v. 5a)
II. He made man the crown (the most important part) of creation (v. 5b)
III. He made man His vice-regent over creation (vv. 6-8).
 Included in the sermon would be man’s responsibility to rule the world with wisdom as a steward of the world, not as an owner.

⁹ ***O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*** I

Psalm 19: 1-13 (NIV)

¹ *The heavens* a
declare the glory of God; b
the skies a
proclaim the work of his hands. b

The **heavens** and **skies** are parallel terms of location while **declare** and **proclaim** are parallel verbs of proclamation.

² Day after day c
 they pour forth speech; d
 night after night c
 they display knowledge. d

Day after day and **night after night** are parallel terms for time while **pour forth speech** and **display knowledge** are parallel phrases for imparting knowledge.

³ There is no **SPEECH OR LANGUAGE** d
 where *their voice* is not heard. e
⁴ *Their voice* goes out into all the earth, e
 their **WORDS** to the ends of the world. d

Verse 3 is synonymously parallel to v. 4, but there is a chiasmic arrangement here with **speech or language** parallel with **words** and **their voice** in v. 3b corresponding to **their voice** in v. 4a.

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the **sun**, **I**

⁵ **which** is like a **bridegroom** //
coming forth from *his* pavilion,
like a **champion** //
rejoicing to run *his* course.

⁶ *It* rises at one end of the heavens
 and makes its circuit to the other;
 nothing is hidden from its heat.

⁷ The **law** of the LORD is *perfect*,
reviving the soul.
 The **statutes** of the LORD are *trustworthy*,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The **precepts** of the LORD are *right*,
giving joy to the heart.
 The **commands** of the LORD are *radiant*,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The **fear** of the LORD is *pure*,
enduring forever.
 The **ordinances** of the LORD are *sure*
 and altogether righteous.

¹⁰ **They** are *more precious than gold*,
than much pure gold;
they are *sweeter than honey*,
than honey from the comb.

¹¹ By **them** is your servant warned;
 in keeping **them** there is great reward.

¹² Who can discern his errors?
 Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
 may they not rule over me.
 Then will I be blameless,
 innocent of great transgression.

b
c
b
c
I

Bridegroom and **champion** are synonymously parallel. **Coming forth** and **rejoicing to run** are parallel. **His pavilion** and **his course** as well as **coming forth** and **rejoicing to run**. **Like a bridegroom** and **like a champion** are *similes* using **like** or **as** to compare two dissimilar things (cf. my *Hermeneutics III. Special Literary Methods B. Similes and Metaphors*, p. 40)
 Verse 4b and v. 6 form an *inclusion* introducing and concluding this section of the psalm. They are labeled **I**.

a
b
a
b
a
b
a
b
a
b
a
b

These are synonymous parallelisms which are interconnected by subject matter and verb forms. Some *positive characteristic* of the law of God is given in the first line **a** followed by a *positive benefit* of the law of God in line **b** in verbal form—**reviving the soul, making wise, giving joy, giving light**.
 Notice the repetitive phrase, **of the Lord**. Also notice that the **fear of the Lord** is parallel to the **law, statutes, precepts, commands, ordinances** of the Lord. Thus, there is no fear of God without a reverence for His law.

c
d
c
d

This is a *developing parallel* which extends the thought of the first line. **Much pure gold** extends the thought of **gold**, and **honey from the comb** extends the thought of **honey**. In other words, it is *fresh* honey straight from the comb.

e
f

Warning against the curses of the covenant and a reminder of the blessings of the covenant.

e
f
e
f
e
f

Verse 11, I believe, is an introduction to vv. 12-13. The psalmist is making a transition from the material analogies of gold and honey to the spiritual **reward** of being **forgiven**, free from the **rule** of sin, and **innocent**.

Psalm 147

Praise the LORD. How **good** it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

a
b

Developing parallelism in which the second line extends the thought of the first line.

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
 he gathers the exiles of Israel. **c**
³He heals the brokenhearted
 and binds up their wounds. **d**
⁴He determines the number of the stars
 and calls them each by name. (Psalm 147:1-4 NIV) **e**
f
g
h

2. Contrasting (Antithetic) Parallelism—the opposite thought or meaning occurs in the second line (or verse). Line one (or the first verse) contrasts with line two (or the second verse). The word, **but**, usually occurs at the beginning of line two (or the second verse) as an indication of contrast.

²Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.” *Selah*
³**BUT** you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.
 (Psalm 3:2-3 NIV)

Notice the **but**. This *adversative conjunction* sets up the contrast between v.2 and v. 3.

⁶You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.
⁷**BUT I**, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple. (Psalm 5:6-7 NIV)

¹⁰Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall.
 Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you.
¹¹**BUT** let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. (Psalm 5:10-11 NIV)

The LORD examines the righteous,
BUT the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates. (Psalm 11:5 NIV)

You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor,
BUT the LORD is their refuge. (Psalm 14:6 NIV)

You save the humble
BUT bring low those whose eyes are haughty. (Psalm 18:27 NIV)

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
BUT we trust in the name of the LORD our God. (Psalm 20:7 NIV)

The lions may grow weak and hungry,
BUT those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10 NIV)

A righteous man may have many troubles,
BUT the LORD delivers him from them all; (Psalm 34:19 NIV)

For evil men will be cut off,
BUT those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. (Psalm 37:9 NIV)

³⁷ Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.

³⁸ **BUT all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off.** (Ps. 37:37-38 NIV)

3. Developing (Synthetic) Parallelism—the second line develops and completes the thought of the first line. There is therefore an *extended or expounded thought* in the second line of the parallelism. (See also the explanation on p. 1.)

Psalm 5 A psalm of David.

Give ear to **my words, O LORD,**
 consider **my sighing.**

² Listen to **my cry for help,**
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.



³ In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice;
 in the morning **I lay my requests before you**
 and **wait in expectation.**

A¹

How is the thought in the second line an extension or exposition (explanation) of the first line? The addition of the words, **my cry for help and for to you I pray.** Furthermore, the psalmist expands on his address to the Lord with **my king and my God.** There is further extension in v. 3 with **In the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.** Thus, he is *developing* the thought of the first line (v. 1). There is also confidence: **You hear my voice and in expectation.**

⁴ You are **not a God who takes pleasure** in evil;
 with you the wicked **cannot dwell.**

⁵ The arrogant **cannot stand** in your presence;
 you **hate** all who do wrong.

⁶ You **destroy** those who tell lies;
 bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD **abhors.**

B¹

Note also the developing parallelism in vv. 4-6. **Not a God who takes pleasure...cannot dwell...cannot stand...you hate...destroy...abhors.** There is quite a step from not taking pleasure in someone and abhorring and destroying someone.

⁷ **But** I, by your great mercy, **will come** into your house;
 in reverence **will I bow down** toward your holy temple.

A²

Returns to the confidence of A¹

⁸ Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies—
 make straight your way before me.

⁹ Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;
 their heart is filled with destruction.
 Their throat is an open grave;
 with their tongue they speak deceit.

B²

Contrasting (Antithetic) Parallelism consisting of meaning blocks, not lines. Meaning block A¹ contrasts with Meaning block B¹. Confident *expectation of being heard* changes to the *expectation of God's judgment* on the wicked. Meaning block A² returns to the positive confidence of A¹ in contrast with B¹ (note the word, **but**) while B² returns to the negative description of the wicked. Thus, there is an ABAB parallelism followed by another A³ at the end.

¹⁰ **Declare them guilty, O God!**
 Let their intrigues be their downfall.
Banish them for their many sins,
 for they have rebelled against you.

C¹

Meaning block C¹ is a **development or synthesis** from B¹ and B². In B¹ and B², he simply states the fact that the wicked cannot stand in God's presence and then gives a further description of them. But in C¹ he calls down the wrath of God upon them. This is known as an *imprecation*.

¹¹ **BUT** let all who take refuge in you be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them, A³
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

A³ is a return to the positive expectation of the righteous man who takes refuge in God. It is also a continuing contrast. He calls for God's blessing.

¹² For **surely**, O LORD, you bless the righteous;
you surround them with your favor as with a shield. (Psalm 5:1-12 NIV)

One more thing must be pointed out. Notice how Psalm 5 contributes to the overall *theme* of the Psalms found in Psalm 1. There is striking similarity.

Psalm 7 A *shiggaion* of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

O LORD my God, I take refuge in you;
save and deliver me from all who **pursue me**,
² or they **will tear me like a lion**
and **rip me to pieces** with no one to rescue me.
³ O LORD my God, if I have done this

Save and deliver me... is an extension from **I take refuge in you**. Furthermore, **they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces** is a development or extension from **all who pursue me**. It is one thing to be chased, but another to be chased by people who want to rip you to pieces!

and *[if implied]* there is guilt on my hands—

⁴ if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me

If I have done evil to him who is at peace with me is a development from **if I have done this** and *[if]...there is guilt on my hands*. Also, **let my enemy pursue and overtake me** is developed with **let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust**.

or without cause have robbed my foe—

⁵ then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;

let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust. *Selah*

Rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice develops the first line, **Arise, O Lord, in your anger**.

⁶ Arise, O LORD, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.

⁷ Let the assembled peoples gather around you.
Rule over them from on high;
⁸ let the LORD judge the peoples.
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
according to my integrity, O Most High.

The last four lines of vv. 7-8 develop the thought of the first line of v. 7. They are not mere repetitions, but expositions or explanations of the first line. Let God judge those who are assembled around Him, including me!

⁹ O righteous God,
who searches minds and hearts,
bring to an end the violence of the wicked
and make the righteous secure.

¹⁰ My shield is God Most High,
who saves the upright in heart.

¹¹ God is a righteous judge,
a God who expresses his wrath every day.

¹² If he does not relent,
he will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.

¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons;
he makes ready his flaming arrows.

Note the development in vv. 11-13. God is not only a righteous judge who daily expresses His anger against sin, but He does not cease doing so nor does He ever soften toward unrepented sin. Rather, He prepares His weapons which will be used against the wicked. He is sharpening His sword, stringing His bow, and dipping His arrows in flammable liquids to shoot flaming arrows at the wicked. Upon hearing the prayer of the righteous, God goes into action—preparing to do battle against the wicked on behalf of the righteous. Verses 11-13 are also an extension of vv. 9-10 in which the psalmist prays for God to **bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure**. He has confidence that God **saves the upright in heart**. Now, in vv. 11-13, the psalmist describes God's answer to his prayer.

4. Climactic Parallelism (Also known as Repetitive or Staircase Parallelism)—

One or more elements from the first line are repeated in the second (or third) line and the **main emphasis** or climax comes at the **end** of the second line. Climactic parallelism most often comes at the end of a strophe or a grouping of lines which form a unit within the poem (see p. 1).

Psalm 24 (NIV)

⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the **King of glory** may come in.

a
b **A**
c

⁸ Who is this **King of glory**?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

d
e **B**
f

⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the **King of glory** may come in.

a
b **A**
c

¹⁰ Who is he, this **King of glory**?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory. *Selah*
(Psalm 24:1-10 NIV)

d
e **B**
d

Verse 7 begins a strophe (a grouping of lines forming a unit). The climactic parallelism will come at the end of this strophe.
Notice the repetition of words, **King of glory** and **the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle**. Then there is the repetition of the question, **Who is this king of glory?** which reaches a climax in v. 10, **Who is he, this king of glory?** followed by the answer every worshiper is waiting for, **The Lord Almighty, he is the King of glory.** (Of course!)

The climax

This is an example of why *climactic parallelism* is also called *repetitive* or *staircase parallelism*. “As these names imply, repetitive parallelism begins with a statement in the first phrase which is partially repeated in the second but carried further than it would be in synonymous parallelism” (Tremper Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*, p. 101).

Psalm 29: 1-2 (NASB)

Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in holy array.

II. The Classification of Psalms (p. 230, Wolvaardt; cf. McNeill, *Hermeneutics*; p. 86).

A. Laments

1. Individual laments (Psalm 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71)

Psalm 22 (NIV)

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.

My God, my God,

[first invocation]

why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?

[first lament against God]

David begins the psalm with an *invocation* calling upon God. This is followed with a *lament* (or a “complaint”) about his feeling of forsakenness (*Hermeneutics, Elements of a lament*, p. 89). Thus, he freely “states the problem that is being experienced” (p. 146, Wolvaardt). Here, he is “frustrated by God himself” (*Hermeneutics*, p. 88, *e*). Notice the word **but**—**relationship between syntactical parts**. He cries to God, **but** God does not seem to answer.

² **O my God,**

[second invocation]

*I cry out by day,
 BUT you do not answer,
 by night, and am not silent.
³ YET you are enthroned as the Holy One;
 you are the praise of Israel.
⁴ In you our fathers put their trust;
 they trusted and you delivered them.
⁵ They cried to you and were saved;
 in you they trusted and were not disappointed.*

I once viewed vv. 3-5 as an *expression of confidence*. However, during class, Silas McNeill and Ekada Santulinous offered another possibility. David is *still* complaining and essentially says, “You have delivered our fathers in the past; therefore, why don’t you deliver me now in the present?” In light of God’s willingness to deliver in the past, he is now confused at God’s apparent absence. Notice the word **yet**—**relationship between syntactical parts**—which presents a contrast between what God did for the **fathers** and what He seems to be doing now. All the major translations use a **yet** or a **but** to indicate this contrast.

[second lament against God]

← Break or space between the strophes in most translations

⁶ BUT I am a worm and not a man, [a]
 scorned by men and despised by the people. [b]
⁷ All who see me mock me; [a]
 they hurl insults, shaking their heads: [b]

Here, David is complaining about *the actions of others against him (Hermeneutics, p. 88, b)*. Therefore, in the same lament you may find a complaint about God’s actions (or lack of action) **and** about men’s actions. The quotation in v. 8 is spoken in mockery (cf. Matt. 27: 41-43). Because of the structure, I am inclined to interpret the second **he** as David since “**He trusts in the Lord**” refers to David. The enemies mockingly say, “Since David trusts and delights in the Lord, then let the Lord rescue him.” The interpretation could go the other way. **He delights in him** could mean that God delights in David—the usual interpretation (cf. *Psalms*, H.C. Leupold).

⁸ "He trusts [a] in the LORD [b]; a
 let the LORD [b] rescue him. [a] b
 Let HIM [b] deliver him, [a] b
 since he [a] delights in HIM." [b] a

[first lament against the actions of others]

← Break between strophes.

⁹ YET you brought me out of the womb; a
 YOU MADE ME TRUST IN YOU b
 even at my mother's breast a
¹⁰ From birth I was cast upon you; a
 from my mother's womb a
 YOU HAVE BEEN MY GOD. b

The *chiastic* structure and repetition of vv. 9b-10 emphasizes the close relationship David has had with God since the time he was born. Notice the **yet** in v. 9—relationship between the different syntactical parts. Like vv. 3-5 above, this is also a continuation of the *lament*. Paraphrased, “I have never consciously known a day when I did not trust in you; therefore, why won’t you help me?” David was a covenant child whose father and mother taught him about the covenant Lord from birth. This does not, however, insulate the child of God from trouble and persecution—contrary to the “health and wealth gospel”.

[second lament against God]

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
 for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

[first supplication]

Break between strophes.

¹² **Many bulls [a] surround me; [b]**
strong bulls of Bashan [a] encircle me. [b]

¹³ **Roaring lions tearing their prey [a]**
open their mouths wide against me. [b]

[second lament against the actions of others]

¹⁴ *I am poured out like water,*
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted away within me.

¹⁵ *My strength is dried up like a potsherd,*
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
YOU lay me in the dust of death.

[third lament against God]

¹⁶ **Dogs [a] have surrounded me; [b]**
a band of evil men [a] has encircled me, [b]
they [a] have pierced my hands and my feet. [b]

¹⁷ **I can count all my bones; [c]**
people [a] stare and gloat over me. [b]

¹⁸ **They [a] divide my garments among them [b]**
and [they-a] cast lots for my clothing. [b]

[third lament against the actions of others]

Continuing lament (complaint) concerning men's actions against him (vv. 12-13). (Note the **ababab** parallel.)

Lament against God continues in vv. 14-15 concluding with **You** [not they] **lay me in the dust of death**. David recognizes that what men do to him is the result of God's **providence and permission**. If God could not control men, why should David pray to God for deliverance? This recognition refers us back to the initial complaint against **God**, "Why have **you** forsaken me?"

Note the *simile*, "like water", in v. 14. Verses 14-15 is also a **developing parallel** with a possible *climax* in v. 15b, **you lay me in the dust of death**. David feels that his life is ebbing away (slowly being extinguished), and his despair is climaxed in the conclusion that God has forsaken him.

"Dogs" is a reference to pagan Gentiles. By now you will readily recognize this psalm as a type of the crucifixion of Christ during which he was surrounded by mocking Jews and Gentile Roman soldiers.

The second [they] in v. 18 is implied but not verbally expressed.

Break between strophes.

¹⁹ **BUT you, O LORD,** a
 be not far off; b

O my Strength, a
 come quickly to help me. b

²⁰ **Deliver my life** b

from the sword, c
[deliver] my precious life b

from the power of the dogs. c

²¹ **Rescue me** b

from the mouth of the lions; c
save me b

from the horns of the wild oxen. c
[second supplication]

Note the **but—relationships between the different syntactic parts** (p. 150, Wolvaardt).

This is the second **supplication** (plea for help) which is a **developing parallel** from the first supplication in v. 11. (Notice the different fonts or lettering.)

Further, vv. 20-21 is a development or extension of v. 19, **come quickly to help me**. That is, **help me** escape **from the power of the dogs...from the mouth of lions...from the horns of the wild oxen**.

Notice that the last three dangers are *metaphors*. He is not talking about animals, but people. Also notice the repetition of the preposition, **from**.

I have added [deliver] since the verb is implied.

The parallel is further developed from **Deliver my life** to **my precious life** and from **Rescue me** to **save me**.

Therefore, the psalms can be classified in more than one way.

This is clearly a **lament**, but one which contains a **developing parallel**.

²² *I will declare your name* [a]
 to my brothers, [b]
 in the congregation [b]
I will praise you. [a]

²³ You who fear the LORD, [c]
 praise him! [d]
All you descendants of Jacob, [c]
 honor him! [d]
 Revere him, [d]
all you descendants of Israel ! [c]

[first call to praise]

²⁴ **FOR** he has not despised or disdained [a]
 the suffering of the afflicted one; [b]
 he has not hidden his face [a]
 from him [b]
BUT has listened [a]
 to his cry for help. [b]

[first reason for praise]

← Break between strophes.

²⁵ From you comes the theme of my **praise** in the great assembly;
 before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
 they who seek the LORD will **praise** him—
 may your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and **turn** to the LORD,
 and all the families of the nations will **bow down** before him,

[second call to praise]

²⁸ **FOR** dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before
 him—those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—
 for he has done it.

[second reason for praise]

Notice the subject (**I**), verb forms (**will declare; will praise you**), prepositional phrases and the objects of prepositions (**to my brothers, in the congregation**). All of these grammatical elements help us see the stylistic features and structure of poetry.

The **conclusion** of the lament, in this case, is a **hymn of thanksgiving or praise** (*Hermeneutics*, p. 89, 2. g. “Hymn or blessing”; cf. Wolvaardt, p. 146). Verses 22-24 might also be interpreted as another **confession of trust**. David is praising the Lord ahead of time for what he interprets as sure deliverance based upon God’s actions in the past (vv. 3-5; note the past tense verbs). But I believe the section is actually the beginning of the conclusion—a **hymn of praise**. The structure for this **hymn of praise** is the following: (1) a call to praise; vv. 22-23 (2) reasons for praise; v. 24 (3) further call to praise; vv. 25-27. The second call to praise is followed by (4) another reason for praise; v. 28. Notice the **For** of v. 24 indicating a syntactical relationship—in this case, a reason for praise. **For** occurs again in v. 28 introducing a second reason for praise. Thus, the reason indicators learned for exposition/exhortation also apply to the interpretation of poetry.

Note the **for**, a reason indicator.

Psalm 42 (NIV)

For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah.

¹As the deer [a]
 pants [b]
 for streams of water, [c]
 so my soul [a]
 pants [b]
 for you, O God. [c]

² My soul [a]
 thirsts [b]
 for God,
 for the living God. [c]

Note the *simile* in v. 1 using **as--As the deer pants...**Panting means breathing heavily and rapidly. Here, it is used figuratively of the psalmist's strong desire for God. Another metaphor is used in v. 2, **thirsts**. Verse 2 is a *developing parallel* from v. 1 that further extends and develops the thought of desiring God. **For the living God** [d] develops **for God** just before it.

[invocation—calling upon God]

When can I go and meet with God? is *not* a rhetorical question. The psalmist seriously questions God's presence in his situation. **Theology**—This is the purpose of laments. They are inspired expressions of the sense of forsakenness which God's people often experience.

WHEN can I go and meet with **God?** [a]
³ My tears have been my food [b]
 day and night, [c]
 WHILE men say to me [d]
 all day long, [c]

The **when** and the **while** are syntactic indicators showing the *temporal* (time) relationship between **My tears have been my food** and **men say to me**. The psalmist is suffering severe emotional pain while his enemy taunts him, **Where is your God?"** In other words, "Because of your bad circumstances, God must not be here. He must have abandoned you!"

"WHERE is your **God?"** [a]
 [*first lament concerning men's actions*]

⁴ These things I remember as I pour out my soul:
 how I **USED TO GO** with the multitude,
 ——— **LEADING** the procession to the house of **God,**
 WITH SHOUTS of joy and thanksgiving
 AMONG the festive throng.

Used to go is another *temporal indicator* showing that the events of v. 4 are no longer true. Note the *stair-step, climactic parallelism* emphasizing the anguish of his soul as he remembers better times.

[*second lament concerning his own thoughts*]

← **Hermeneutics**, p. 88, (a)

Break between strophes

⁵ Why are you downcast, O my soul?
 Why so disturbed within me?
 Put your hope in **God**, for I will yet praise **him**,
 my **Savior** and ⁶ my **God**. →
 [*first confession of trust and first hymn of praise*]

Rhetorical questions demanding a certain answer. The psalmist already knows the answer to these questions. They are found in v.5b—He is not putting his trust where it belongs, in God.

Verse 5 forms the introduction of an **inclusion** which includes vv. 6-10

Inclusion

My soul is downcast within me;

[third lament concerning his own thoughts]

THEREFORE I will remember **you**

→
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—
from Mount Mizar.

[second confession of trust]

⁷ *Deep calls to deep in the roar of **your** waterfalls;
all **your** waves and breakers have swept over me.*

[fourth lament concerning God's actions]

⁸ By day the **LORD** directs **his** love,
at night **his** song is with me—a prayer to the **God** of my life.

[third confession of trust and second hymn of praise]

⁹ *I say to **God my Rock**, "Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"*

¹⁰ *My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long, "**WHERE is your God?**"*

[fourth lament concerning God's actions and men's actions]

Inclusion

¹¹ *Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in **God**,
for I will yet praise **him**, my **Savior** and my **God**.*

[fourth confession of trust and third hymn of praise]

Originally, Pss. 42 and 43 were one psalm. Examine Ps. 43 for many repetitions from Ps. 42.

Verses 5-7 contains *lament, confession of trust*, and a *hymn of praise*. The psalmist is beginning to "preach the gospel to himself" the moment he asks, **Why are you downcast, O my soul?...** He then discerns the answer to his despair—not to run *from* God but to run *to* Him. Note also the syntactic relationship indicator, **therefore**. He says to himself, "I am downcast, **therefore**, the only remedy for my despair is to remember God's lovingkindness in spite of His severe providence (vv. 5-7). Note the *metaphor* in v. 7. The psalmist likens the severe providences of God to wave after wave of rapid waters rolling over him and threatening to drown him. Therefore, he complains to God that His providence may prove to be his undoing. He may not be able to survive any more calamities. God's providence is often like this—severe rather than pleasant—and sometimes we don't know how much more we can endure (cf. Job 23: 14).

Break between strophes

Notice the repetitive refrains, **all day long** and **Where is your God?** (vv. 3, 9)

Break between strophes

Notice the repetitive strophe that forms an *inclusion* with v. 5. The inclusion places a bracket around vv. 6-10. This inclusion is the *emphasis of the whole psalm*. Whenever we feel abandoned by God, we must preach to ourselves, assuring ourselves that external circumstances do not indicate that we are abandoned. Compare this structure with Wolvaardt, p. 146 and McNeill, p. 89. Each psalm of lament will vary in organization but will have some or all the elements listed on p. 89.

2. Corporate Laments (Psalms 12, 44, 80, 94, 137; Wolvaardt, p. 231; also Ps. 60, *Hermeneutics*, p. 80).

Psalm 22 is an **individual** lament dealing with David's personal feelings of forsakenness. Some laments, however, are concerned with God's dealings with the **corporate nation** of Israel; therefore, the interpreter must determine which elements of the Israel's situation would apply to the corporate congregation, the church. Psalm 60 concerns defeat in battle which David interprets as the judgment of God and the rejection of Israel. You will notice the historical heading at the beginning of the Psalm. Read **2 Sam. 8** and **1 Chr. 18** for the incidents which may have given rise to this Psalm. The difference is that these narratives give no hint of any defeat. For a discussion of this difference, see Leupold, cited below. *Although the headings of the Psalms are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, we do well to pay attention to them and trust them as historically accurate.* H.C. Leupold, one of the greatest expositors of the Psalms, makes the following remark concerning the heading of the Psalm 60 which is applicable to other headings:

The heading of the psalm, which consists of two verses, is a very helpful guide in the interpretation of this prayer. It again deserves to be accepted as being correct as the headings of *all* the psalms are (H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, p. 447; emphasis mine).

He also makes this remark about headings at the beginning of his book.

We arrive at the conclusion that, when a heading claims that the psalm in question is associated with some such event, that possibility *dare not be lightly thrust aside but may be accepted as long as there is no conflict between the claim and the contents of the psalm.* By way of illustration we may refer to the following psalms as involving such situations: 3, 46-48, 51, etc." (Leupold, p. 8; emphasis mine).

Psalm 60 (NIV)

For the director of music. To *the tune of* "The Lily of the Covenant." A *miktam* of David. For teaching. When he fought Aram Naharaim and Aram Zobah, and when Joab returned and struck down twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

*You have rejected us, O God,
AND burst forth upon us;
you have been angry—*

Lament

NOW *restore us!*

Supplication

² *You have shaken the land
and torn it open;*

Lament

*mend its fractures,
for it is quaking.*

Supplication

³ *You have shown your people desperate times;
you have given us wine that makes us stagger.*

Lament

The *invocation* is subtle and is included in the first part of the *lament*. The corporate lament begins in the first verse with David's *complaint* followed immediately by *supplication*. Remember that he is in the heat of battle (see heading for historical context), and his urgency is reflected here. In contrast to the repetitive *me* in Ps. 22, notice the repetitive *us* in this psalm. Not David personally, but Israel, has been rejected. **Theology**—Notice that David's complaint is not about Satan, but about God. It is not Satan, but God, who is in control of the battle; and if things are going poorly, God is the one who must be sought. Notice the number of times *you, my, mine* occurs in the psalm.

Break between strophes

⁴ **BUT** for those who fear **you**,
you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow. *Selah*

Confession of trust

A **banner** was a long pole with an emblem on top, the equivalent of a flag, representing the nation. It was used to rally the troops during a battle. When the troops saw that the banner was visible, there was still hope for victory.

⁵ **Save us and help us with your right hand,
that those you love may be delivered.** Supplication
⇒

⁶ **God** has spoken from his sanctuary:
“In triumph **I** will parcel out Shechem
and measure off the Valley of Succoth.

⁷ Gilead is **mine**, and Manasseh is **mine**,
Ephraim is **my** helmet, Judah **my** scepter.

⁸ Moab is **my** washbasin,
upon Edom **I** toss my sandal;
over Philistia **I** shout in triumph.” **Confession of Trust**

David now perceives that God has answered his supplication favorably and will now trounce (utterly defeat) the enemies of Israel. Tossing the **sandal** upon Edom is symbolic of gaining Edom as Israel’s possession (Leupold; cf. **Step 5 of HTIB, Read the interpretation of others**). Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, etc. were tribes and territories of Israel which belonged to God, and He was not willing to give them up.

⁹ Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?

¹⁰ Is it not **you, O God**,
you who have rejected us
and no longer go out with our armies?

Notice the **rhetorical question** in v. 9-10. David is convinced that God will once again go out with the armies of Israel.

¹¹ **Give us aid against the enemy,
for the help of man is worthless.** Supplication

¹² With **God** we will gain the victory,
and **he** will trample down our enemies. **Confession of Trust**

David petitions God for help, or else all is lost. He does not imply that God will miraculously destroy the enemy without Israel fighting; but rather, that no human effort will be adequate unless God is fighting **for** Israel (cf. Ps. 20: 7; Isa. 31: 1)

B. Thanksgiving Psalms (Wolvaardt, p. 231; *Hermeneutics*, p. 90)

In many laments, the psalmist makes a promise to God that he will give thanks to Him if God will hear his prayer and deliver him from the present distress (Ps. 6, 13). The thanksgiving psalm is the psalmist’s response to answered prayer, so there is a close connection between the lament and the psalm of thanksgiving. In the thanksgiving of Ps. 18, there is a restatement of the lament found in vv. 4-5 along with the acknowledgement that his lament was heard and his prayer answered (vv.6-19) (Longman, pp. 30-31).

Other examples of thanksgiving psalms are Pss. 32 and 34 which have the following structure (Harman, p.29):

1. Praise of the Lord, or Blessing
2. Testimony to God’s goodness in his life
3. Often there is a lament
4. Description of God’s salvation

Psalm 32 (NIV)
Of David. A *maskil*.

(1) ¹*Blessed* [a]
is he [b]
(2) whose *transgressions* [c]
ARE FORGIVEN, [d]
(3) whose *sins* [c]
are covered. [d]
(4) ²*Blessed* [a]
is the man [b]
(5) whose *sin* [c]
THE LORD DOES NOT
COUNT AGAINST HIM [d]
(6) AND in whose spirit [c]
IS NO DECEIT.³ [d]

David begins with a pronouncement of blessing (*Hermeneutics*, p. 90, a.).
Theology—The man who is *truly* forgiven is not the man who merely *asks* for forgiveness, but the one who is *sincere and honest* in his repentance and who demonstrates the fruit of repentance (cf. Lk. 3: 7-14).

Note the parallels: **transgressions** and **sins**; **forgiven, covered, the Lord does not count against. In whose spirit is no deceit** is parallel because it is the fruit of genuine repentance.
One can see how the psalms are the *popular theology* of the common people.

[1. blessing and 4. description of God’s salvation]

← Break between strophes

(7) ³*When I kept silent,* [a]
(8) my bones wasted away through my groaning [b]
(9) all day long. [c]
(10) [3. lament] ⁴For day and night [c]
(11) your hand was heavy upon me; [b]
(12) my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. *Selah*

(13) ⁵*Then I acknowledged my sin to you* [a]
(14) AND did not cover up my iniquity. [a]
(15) I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”— [a]
(16) and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah* [b]

L 7-12 is a *lament*. Line 7 is antithetically parallel to L13—*keeping silent* about my sin rather than *acknowledging my sin*.
L14-15 develop the parallel begun in L13. Further, the severe discipline in L8-12 is antithetically parallel to the forgiveness in L16.
Theology—It is much better to acknowledge our sin; otherwise, we will surely receive discipline from the Lord who will not allow His children to depart from the truth

[2. testimony to God’s goodness in his life; L13-16]

Break between strophes

⁶Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you
while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise,
they will not reach him.
⁷You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*

Verse 5 is a **climactic parallel**. **Acknowledged my sin=did not cover up my iniquity=I will confess my transgressions**. L14-15 develop the thought of L13.

Therefore refers back to David’s previous experience: (1) agony while he kept silent and refused to repent, and (2) forgiveness from God when he finally repented. **Let everyone who is godly pray** is equivalent to “Let everyone who is godly pray the prayer of repentance”. The **mighty waters** is a *metaphor* for God’s discipline (cf. Ps. 18: 16; 69: 1, 2; 144: 7; cited by Leupold, p. 268). If he repents early, he can avoid unnecessary discipline from the Lord.

[2. testimony to God’s goodness in his life]

Break between strophes

Psalm 18 For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: I love you, O LORD, my strength.² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.³ I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.⁴ **The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.⁵ The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.⁶ In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.**

Verses 4-5 contain a lament followed by God's answer to his prayer in v. 6 (cf. *Hermeneutics*, p. 90). The entire psalm is thanksgiving for his deliverance. Furthermore, the description of God's salvation is especially evident in vv. 1-3. In the following verses (vv. 19-27), David makes a strong **assertion of innocence** which is sometimes included in laments (*Hermeneutics*, p. 89).

¹⁹He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.²⁰ **The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.²¹ For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God.²² All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees.²³ I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.²⁴ The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.²⁵ To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless,²⁶ to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.²⁷ You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.**

Psalm 107 (NIV)

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

[1. Praise of the Lord]

²Let the redeemed of the LORD say this—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,³ those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

[4. description of God's salvation]

⁴Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.⁵ They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

[3. Lament]

⁶Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.⁷ He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.

[4. description of God's salvation]

⁸Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,

[1. Praise of the Lord]

⁹for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

[2. Testimony to God's goodness in his life]

¹⁰Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains,¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.¹² So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

[3. Lament]

¹³Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.

[4. Description of God's salvation]

¹⁵ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,
[1. Praise of the Lord]

¹⁶ for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.
[4. Description of God's salvation]

¹⁷ Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. ¹⁸ They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.
[3. Lament]

¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. ²⁰ He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.
[4. Description of God's salvation]

²¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. ²² Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.
[1. Praise of the Lord]

²³ Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. ²⁴ They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. ²⁵ For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. ²⁶ They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. ²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end.
[3. Lament]

²⁸ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. ²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. ³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.
[4. Description of God's salvation]

³¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.
³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.
[1. Praise of the Lord]

³³ He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, ³⁴ and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. ³⁵ He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; ³⁶ there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. ³⁷ They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; ³⁸ he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish.
[2. Testimony to God's goodness in his life]

³⁹ Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow; ⁴⁰ he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste.
[3. Lament]

⁴¹ But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. ⁴² The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths.
[4. Description of God's salvation]

⁴³ Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.
[1. Praise of the Lord]

C. Hymns of Praise (Wolvaardt, p. 147; *Hermeneutics*, p. 86).

We have discussed hymns earlier under **laments** since laments commonly have **hymns of praise** in response to God's answer to prayer. They are characterized by joyful praise of the Lord. The basic structure of the hymn includes the following:

1. Call to praise
2. Reasons why God should be praised
3. Further (final) calls to praise

Psalm 111 (NIV)

Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

[1. Call to praise]

² Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. ³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate. ⁵ He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. ⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations. ⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. ⁸ They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness. ⁹ He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name.

[2. Reasons for praise]

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

[3. Final call to praise]

Psalm 148 (NIV)

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. ² Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. ³ Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. ⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,

[1. Call to praise]

for he commanded and they were created. ⁶ He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

[2. Reasons for praise]—notice the “for”, a reason indicator

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, ⁸ lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, ⁹ you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, ¹⁰ wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, ¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, ¹² young men and maidens, old men and children. ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,

[1. Call to praise]

for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. ¹⁴ He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.

[2. Reasons for praise]—notice the “for”

Praise the LORD.

[3. Final call to praise]

Psalm 149 (NIV)

Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. ² Let Israel rejoice in their

Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King.³ Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp.

[1. Call to praise]

⁴ **For** the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.⁵ Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.⁶ May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands,⁷ to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,⁸ to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron,⁹ to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints.

[2. Reasons for praise]—notice the “for”

Praise the LORD.

[3. Final call to praise]

Psalm 104 (NIV)

Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God,

[1. Call to praise]

you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty.² He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.⁴ He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.⁵ He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.⁶ You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.⁷ But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;⁸ they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them.⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.¹⁰ He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains.¹¹ They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.¹² The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.¹³ He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work.¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth:¹⁵ wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.¹⁶ The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.¹⁷ There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees.¹⁸ The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coney.¹⁹ The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.²⁰ You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.²¹ The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God.²² The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.²³ Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening.²⁴ How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.²⁵ There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small.²⁶ There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.²⁷ These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time.²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.²⁹ When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.³⁰ When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—³² he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

[2. Reasons for praise]—the works of God in creation and providence

³³ I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

[3. Further call to praise]

³⁵ But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

[Imprecation—not usually part of a hymn; therefore, I have not given the imprecation a letter.]

Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.

[3. Final call to praise]

D. Salvation History Psalms—(Psalms of Remembrance) (Wolvaardt, p. 231; *Hermeneutics*, p. 91; note, the revised list of elements from p. 91 is found below)

- 1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history**
- 2. Focusing attention particularly on the Exodus from Egypt**
- 3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises**
- 4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites**
- 5. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant curse for Israel's disobedience**
- 6. Doing this to call forth praise or to encourage future generations to trust in the Lord**

Psalm 105

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.² Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.³ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

[Notice that this psalm resembles the psalm of thanksgiving. Were it not for the specific emphasis on Israel's history and God's covenant faithfulness, it could be classified as such.]

⁵ Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,⁶ O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.⁷ He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history]

⁸ He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:¹¹ "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."

[3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises]

¹² When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it,¹³ they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.¹⁴ He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings:¹⁵ "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."¹⁶ He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food;¹⁷ and he sent a man before them—Joseph, sold as a slave.¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons,¹⁹ till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.²⁰ The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free.²¹ He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed,²² to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.²³ Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.²⁴ The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes,²⁵ whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.²⁶ He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen.²⁷ They performed his miraculous signs among them, his wonders in the land of Ham.²⁸ He sent darkness and made the land dark—for had they not rebelled against his words?²⁹ He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die.³⁰ Their land teemed with frogs, which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers.³¹ He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country.³² He turned their rain into hail, with lightning throughout their land;³³ he struck down their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country.³⁴ He spoke, and the locusts came, grasshoppers without number;³⁵ they ate up every green thing in their land, ate up the produce of their soil.³⁶ Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their manhood.³⁷ He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered.³⁸ Egypt was glad when they left, because dread of Israel had fallen on them.³⁹ He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history 2. Focusing attention particularly on the Exodus from Egypt]

⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought them quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history]

⁴² For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham.

[3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises]

⁴³ He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy; ⁴⁴ he gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history]

⁴⁵ that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws.

[6. Doing this to call forth praise or to encourage future generations to trust in the Lord]

Praise the LORD.

[Again, an element of a thanksgiving psalm and the hymn. Do not let this confuse you. Not every psalm that has the admonition to “praise the Lord” should be classified as a hymn or thanksgiving psalm. Clearly, the main emphasis of this psalm is the *remembrance* of God's mighty deeds of the past as confirmation of his covenant promises to the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.]

Psalm 78 (NIV)

A *maskil* of Asaph.

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. ² I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—³ what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history]

⁴ We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, ⁶ so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. ⁷ Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history 6. Doing this to call forth praise or to encourage future generations to trust in the Lord—Immediately we recognize the direction in which the psalmist is heading. The history lessons of past (notice the past-tense verb, “has done”) must not be forgotten by the future generations of Israel lest they drift into idolatry. Sadly, this is exactly what happened except for a small remnant of the nation (see below). The same can happen to individual churches and denominations. Forgetfulness can ruin a church or denomination.]

⁸ They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. ⁹ The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle; ¹⁰ they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. ¹¹ They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.

[4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites—In vv. 9-11, the psalmist begins to present specific examples of covenant unfaithfulness.]

If I were preaching from this text, I would bridge the gap between Israel and the church by drawing attention to the church's covenantal unfaithfulness in spreading the gospel. The conquest of Canaan by the twelve tribes is an OT *type* of the missionary expanse of the church and the recapturing of the earth from the wicked through the dominion of God's people. This process will not be complete until the return of Christ, but the church is commanded in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations which is essentially Christ's “war-cry” to conquer the world in the triune name of God. Now that Christ has shed His own blood for the nations, there is no need to shed any more blood. What *is* needed are Christ's ambassadors proclaiming peace by means of repentance and faith. Although the church has succeeded in its missionary task in many ways, it has failed to do all it *could have done* in foreign and domestic missions. **Though armed with bows**—namely, the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit, the great commission and the promise of his presence and authority in **Matthew 28: 18-20**, plus material and human resources—the church in many ways **has turned back on the day of battle**, choosing instead a comfortable lifestyle (cf. *Haggai*) and the cultural status quo (the way things are) in its respective

cultures. May we be faithful in finishing the task of “conquering Canaan” with the gospel! Note: This is a preview of **Module 2: Interpreting OT narratives**.

¹² He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. ¹³ He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand firm like a wall. ¹⁴ He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night. ¹⁵ He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas; ¹⁶ he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel’s history 2. Focusing attention particularly on the Exodus from Egypt]

¹⁷ But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High. ¹⁸ They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. ¹⁹ They spoke against God, saying, “Can God spread a table in the desert?” ²⁰ When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?” ²¹

[4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites]

When the LORD heard them, he was very angry; his fire broke out against Jacob, and his wrath rose against Israel, ²² for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.

[5. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant curse for disobedience]—This may sound strange to the modern evangelical, but habitual disobedience is a sign of unbelief. Unbelief, in turn, calls forth the judgment of God against un-believers—a judgment which He “promises” in Deut. 27—28. For a NT example of this concept, refer to my commentary on 2 Tim. 2: 13 in which I follow the interpretation of William Hendriksen, 2 *Timothy*.]

²³ **Yet** he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens; ²⁴ he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. ²⁵ Men ate the bread of angels; he sent them all the food they could eat. ²⁶ He let loose the east wind from the heavens and led forth the south wind by his power. ²⁷ He rained meat down on them like dust, flying birds like sand on the seashore. ²⁸ He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents. ²⁹

[3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises]—God is a God of grace, and even when we are unfaithful, He often blesses us anyway. Such kindness should lead us to repentance (Rom. 2: 4). In this case, His kindness to the Israelites did not result in repentance, and the very thing they craved became a curse to them (see below).]

They ate till they had more than enough, for he had given them what they craved. ³⁰ But before they turned from the food they craved, even while it was still in their mouths, ³¹ God’s anger rose against them; he put to death the sturdiest among them, cutting down the young men of Israel. ³² In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of his wonders, they did not believe. ³³ So he ended their days in futility and their years in terror.

[5. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant curse for disobedience]

³⁴ Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. ³⁵ They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer.

[6. Doing this to call forth praise or to encourage future generations to trust in the Lord]

³⁶ But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; ³⁷ their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant.

[4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites]

³⁸ Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. ³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

[3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises]

⁴⁰ How often they rebelled against him in the desert and grieved him in the wasteland! ⁴¹ Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel.

[4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites]

⁴² They did not remember his power—the day he redeemed them from the oppressor, ⁴³ the day he displayed his

miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan.⁴⁴ He turned their rivers to blood; they could not drink from their streams.⁴⁵ He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, and frogs that devastated them.⁴⁶ He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust.⁴⁷ He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore-figs with sleet.⁴⁸ He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning.⁴⁹ He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility—a band of destroying angels.⁵⁰ He prepared a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague.⁵¹ He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham.⁵² But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the desert.⁵³ He guided them safely, so they were unafraid; but the sea engulfed their enemies.⁵⁴ Thus he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken.⁵⁵ He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance; he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes.

[1. Retelling the great events in Israel's history 2. Focusing attention particularly on the Exodus from Egypt]

⁵⁶ But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes.⁵⁷ Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow.⁵⁸ They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols.

[4. Stressing covenantal unfaithfulness of the Israelites]

⁵⁹ When God heard them, he was very angry; he rejected Israel completely.⁶⁰ He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among men.⁶¹ He sent *the ark of his might* into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy.⁶² He gave his people over to the sword; he was very angry with his inheritance.⁶³ Fire consumed their young men, and their maidens had no wedding songs;⁶⁴ their priests were put to the sword, and their widows could not weep.

[5. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant curse for disobedience]

⁶⁵ Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, as a man wakes from the stupor of wine.⁶⁶ He beat back his enemies; he put them to everlasting shame.⁶⁷ Then he rejected the tents of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim;⁶⁸ but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved.⁶⁹ He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth that he established forever.⁷⁰ He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens;⁷¹ from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance.⁷² And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.

[3. Stressing the faithfulness of God to his covenant promises]

E. Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation (Wolvaardt, p. 231; *Hermeneutics*, p. 94)

1. Royal psalms (Kingship psalms) (*Hermeneutics*, p. 94)

The characteristics of kingship psalms are the following (but not all of them will be present in every psalm):

- a. Assertion that the Lord ('Yahweh') reigns
- b. God's rule was from of old
- c. God's rule is not only over Israel but the whole world
- d. In Zion the God of Israel is extolled as universal king

Psalm 2 (NIV)

¹Why do the **nations** conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?

²The **kings of the earth** take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the **LORD**
and against his Anointed One.

³"Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters."

c. God's rule is not only over Israel but the whole world. This is not plainly stated here but is implied. The kings of the earth are uniting together to rebel against God's rule over them. Rebellion implies a sovereign God against whom men rebel.

⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
⁵ Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶ “I have installed my King on **Zion**, my holy hill.”
⁷ I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

c. God’s rule is not only over Israel but the whole world (note: enthroned in heaven)
d. In Zion the God of Israel is extolled as universal king

He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

c. That this rule is not only over Israel but the whole world

Based on my observations, I would add the following to the list of characteristics of kingship psalms (but again, not all of them are present in every kingship psalm):

e. God’s rule is a rule of justice and righteousness, the kind of rule which should characterize any earthly kingdom, especially the kingdom of Israel (Note the analysis below of Psalm 72)

Psalm 72 (NIV)

Of Solomon.

¹ Endow the king with *your justice*, O God, the royal son with *your righteousness*. ² He will judge *your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice*. ³ The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. ⁴ He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor. ⁵ He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. ⁶ He will be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. ⁷ In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. ⁸ He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. ⁹ The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. ¹⁰ The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. ¹¹ All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him. ¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. ¹³ He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. ¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. ¹⁵ Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. ¹⁶ Let grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field. ¹⁷ May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. **All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.** ¹⁸ Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. ¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever; **may the whole earth be filled with his glory.** Amen and Amen. ²⁰ This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

[God's universal reign of justice, righteousness, and kindness to the helpless is the primary theme of Psalm 72; and this kind of reign should be imitated by Solomon of whom David writes.]

Psalm 45: 1-7 (NIV)

For the director of music. To *the tune of "Lilies."* Of the Sons of Korah. A *maskil*. A wedding song.

¹My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. ²You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever. ³Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. ⁴**In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness;** let your right hand display awesome deeds. ⁵Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; **let the nations fall beneath your feet.** ⁶Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; **a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.** ⁷**You love righteousness and hate wickedness;** therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy

[There is an emphasis here on justice, righteousness, and truth. Another emphasis is the universal reign of God over the nations.]

Psalm 97 (NIV)

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. ²Clouds and thick darkness surround him; **righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.** ³Fire goes before him and **consumes his foes on every side.** ⁴His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, **before the Lord of all the earth.** ⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. ⁷All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols—worship him, all you gods! ⁸Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, O LORD. ⁹For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. ¹⁰Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. ¹¹Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. ¹²Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

[Again, there is an emphasis upon the **righteous reign** of the Lord whose judgments are welcomed and whose reign provides protection from the wicked (v. 10). Further, notice how many times the name, Lord (Yahweh), occurs in the psalm—(a) the assertion that the Lord ('Yahweh') reigns.]

Psalm 98 (NIV)

¹Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ²The LORD has made his salvation known and **revealed his righteousness to the nations.** ³He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; **all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.** ⁴Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; ⁵make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, ⁶with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the **King.** ⁷Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. ⁸Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; ⁹let them sing before the LORD, **for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.**

Psalm 101

Of David. A psalm.

I will sing of your love and **justice**; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. ²I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. ³I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. ⁴**Men of perverse heart shall be far from me;** I will have nothing to do with evil. ⁵**Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.** ⁶**My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,** that they may dwell with me; **he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.** ⁷**No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.** ⁸Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.

The emphasis in this psalm is the righteous rule of David as a **type** of the perfect rule of Christ. Notice that in v. 4 there is the implication that David's counselors and advisors would be righteous men. **I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the Lord** implies the authority of a king, as well as the phrase, **No one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence**—that is, stand in the presence of the king. Further, the psalm is a type of the consummate kingdom of God when Christ returns in glory to finalize His kingdom on earth. The **faithful in the land will dwell** with Christ and all who are faithless and evil will be banished from the city.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and **may enter by the gates into the city.**¹⁵ **Outside** are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Revelation 22:14-15 NASB)

Only **he whose walk is blameless will minister** to King Jesus in the consummate kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, the kingship psalms must be studied with alertness to their **typological value**. *What do they say concerning the kingdom of Christ on earth at the consummation?* On a practical level, what do they say about the kind of leadership which should exist in the church and in nations?

2. Covenant renewal liturgies (Wolvaardt, p. 231)

Psalm 89 (NASB)

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

<u>I will sing</u>	[a]		
of the <i>lovingkindness of the LORD</i>		[b]	
forever;			[c]
<i>To all generations</i>			[d]
<u>I will make known</u>	[a]		
Your <i>faithfulness</i>		[b]	
<u>with my mouth.</u>	[a]		
² <u>For I have said,</u>	[a]		
" <i>Lovingkindness</i> will be built up		[b]	
forever;			[c]
<i>In the heavens</i>			[d]
<u>You will establish</u>	[a]		
Your <i>faithfulness.</i> "		[b]	

Note the underlined words, **I will sing; I will make known; with my mouth; For I have said; You will establish** [a]. These are the subjects and verbs. **Lovingkindness** and **faithfulness** although different, are parallel to one another [b]. **To all generations** and **In the heavens** are both the sphere or location—on earth and in heaven—in which God's lovingkindness and faithfulness will be sung, made known, built up, established. **Forever** indicates the time in which the lovingkindness and faithfulness of the Lord will be made known and established. In the first part of the psalm, Ethan (the psalmist) is singing of the lovingkindness and faithfulness

of the Lord; but in the last part, God Himself is sovereignly establishing His lovingkindness and faithfulness in the heavens. Ethan’s song, therefore, is not wishful thinking; it is based on the sovereign and immutable activity of God which cannot be overturned.

This is one possibility, but only one among many ways of seeing this psalm. Discerning the structure of a psalm is not an exact science, and you will frustrate yourself by attempting to find the “perfect” interpretation of structure. Nevertheless, by attempting to discern the structure and parallelism in the psalm, you are forced to study it carefully, noting every word, phrase, and how each word and phrase fits with every other word and phrase in the psalm. Below is another possibility which is based purely on the parallel between **lovingkindness** and **faithfulness**.

- (1) I will sing of the **lovingkindness** of the LORD forever;
- (2) To all generations I will make known Your **faithfulness** with my mouth.
- (3) ² For I have said, “**Lovingkindness** will be built up forever;
- (4) In the heavens You will establish Your **faithfulness**.”

a
b
a
b

³ “*I have made a covenant* [a]
 with **My chosen**; [b]
I have sworn [a]
 to **David My servant**, [b]
⁴ *I will establish* [a]
 your seed [b]
 forever [c]
And build up [a]
 your throne [b]
 to all generations.” [c]

Verse 3 is a reference to the everlasting covenant made with David and his dynasty in 2 Samuel 7, particularly vv. 13-16. Thus, in context with vv. 1-2, the **lovingkindness** and **faithfulness** of the Lord refers to the lovingkindness and faithfulness of the Lord **to David and his dynasty** (his extended kingdom).

Selah. Selah may mean, “pause”.

In these two verses, I have indicated a parallel between **forever** and **to all generations**. This change from [d] to [c] may beg the question of whether the meaning indicators of vv. 1-2 should be changed. Once again, this is not an exact science. The important thing is the final interpretation. The psalmist is praising God for his covenantal faithfulness to David by establishing his dynasty **forever** both **in the heavens** and on earth **to all generations**. Since David died, then how could his kingdom be extended to all generations *in heaven and on earth*. Obviously, the psalm is typologically fulfilled in the descent of David who was both God and man (Acts 13: 32-38). Furthermore, while Christ is now reigning in heaven, He will one day return to reign on earth (Rev. 11: 15).

⁵ *The heavens* [a]
 will praise Your wonders, O LORD; [b]
 Your faithfulness also [will be praised--implied] [b]
in the assembly of the holy ones. [a]

The third line demonstrates an *ellipsis* in which a word is left out in order to bind two thoughts more closely together. In this case, **will be praised** is left out. The thought can be supplied as follows: “The heavens will praise your wonders, O LORD; your faithfulness also *will be praised* in the assembly of the holy ones.”

Heavens is synonymous with (similar to) **the assembly of the holy ones**. **Wonders** and **faithfulness** are attributes of God and are therefore labeled the same way [b]. **Your wonders** and **your faithfulness** is the same script as **lovingkindness** and **faithfulness** in vv. 1-2.

Verse 5 can be broken down further. Note the following arrangement:

⁵ <i>The heavens</i>	[a]	
<u>will praise</u>		[b]
Your wonders,		[c]
O LORD;		[d]
Your faithfulness		[c]
<u>also [will be praised--implied]</u>	[b]	
<i>in the assembly of the holy ones.</i>	[a]	
⁶ <i>For who in the skies</i>	[a]	
<i>is comparable to the LORD?</i>		[b]
<i>Who among the sons of the mighty</i>	[a]	
<i>is like the LORD,</i>		[b]
⁷ <i>A God greatly feared</i>		[b]
<i>in the council of the holy ones,</i>	[a]	
And awesome		[b]
<i>above all those who are around Him?</i>	[a]	
⁸ <i>O LORD God</i>		[b]
<i>of hosts,</i>	[a]	
<i>who</i>	[a]	
<i>is like You, O mighty LORD?</i>		[b]
Your faithfulness also		[b]
<i>surrounds You.</i>	[a]	
⁹ <i>You rule</i>		[b]
<i>the swelling of the sea;</i>	[a]	
<i>When its waves rise,</i>	[a]	
<i>You still them.</i>		[b]

By doing it this way, you can see more clearly the *chiastic* arrangement which contains the *middle element* [d].

Verse 6-8 complement v. 5. The script (lettering) shows the similarity between **the heavens** and **the assembly of the holy ones** (v. 5) with **the sons of the mighty** and **the council of the holy ones** (vv. 6-7) and the heavenly **hosts** (v. 8). Note the reason (**For**) why God is praised in the heavens among the **holy ones**. Even the mighty angelic **hosts** cannot be compared with God. Note also the connection between **your faithfulness** in v. 8 and in v. 5. God's faithfulness **surrounds** God much like the angelic hosts surround Him. Take note of the series of *chiastic* arrangements in vv. 6-8 which are continuous with the *chiastic* arrangement of v. 5.

The psalmist has now left the dwelling of God *in heaven* and directs his attention to the dwelling of God *on earth*. **Theology**—God is *omnipresent*—He is everywhere at once, governing heaven and earth. Jesus reveals that He is one with the God of the OT by stilling the sea (Mk. 4: 39).

¹⁰ You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. ¹¹ The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them. ¹² The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name. ¹³ You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted. ¹⁴ **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.** ¹⁵ How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance. ¹⁶ In Your name they rejoice all the day, And by Your righteousness they are exalted. ¹⁷ For You are the glory of their strength, And by Your favor our horn is exalted.

covenant unfaithfulness, Solomon eventually lost the kingdom through his son, Rehoboam, but because of the everlasting promise to David, God's lovingkindness did not depart from Solomon like it did from Saul. Typologically, the covenantal promise to David is fulfilled in the promise to Christ in Ps. 2 and Ps. 110. God has already installed His king—Christ Jesus—on Mount Zion; and He will not allow His king to be displaced by another king. His promise is everlasting.

³⁸ But You have cast off and rejected, You have been full of wrath against Your anointed. ³⁹ You have spurned the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown in the dust. ⁴⁰ You have broken down all his walls; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. ⁴¹ All who pass along the way plunder him; He has become a reproach to his neighbors. ⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies rejoice. ⁴³ You also turn back the edge of his sword And have not made him stand in battle. ⁴⁴ You have made his splendor to cease And cast his throne to the ground. ⁴⁵ You have shortened the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame. Selah.

By now, you should recognize this portion of a *kingship psalm* as a *lament* or *complaint*. To the psalmist, the present circumstances of Israel cast a deep shadow of doubt over the covenant promises to David and his descendents. It would even appear that the everlasting covenant had been rendered null and void. Such a dramatic description may indicate a late date for the psalm, perhaps even during the reign of Zedekiah just before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC (Leupold, p. 632). It is evident, then, that both the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience were in operation with respect to the Davidic Covenant. All the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel were wicked. It fell first in 722 BC. Many of the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah were wicked, including the three sons of Josiah—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, three of the last four kings of Judah (see my *Major and Minor Prophets*, "Timeline", p. 212). However, even in the face of the disobedience of David's descendents, God *cannot* violate His covenant with David. He has **sworn** by His holiness and **will not lie** to David (vv. 34-35). But God did *not* swear to keep His promise by restoring the kingdom to a *merely human* king. Rather, when God restores a Davidic descendent to the throne, He is *both God and man*—the perfect King who will not fail to keep God's commandments (vv. 30-31).

⁴⁶ How long, O LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? ⁴⁷ Remember what my span of life is; For what vanity You have created all the sons of men! ⁴⁸ What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. ⁴⁹ Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, Which You swore to David in Your faithfulness? ⁵⁰ Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants; How I bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the many peoples, ⁵¹ With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.

This is a continuation of the *lament* (note—**how long?**). Unlike most laments, there is no resolution or thanksgiving indicating an answer to the psalmist's prayer. This, too, may indicate that the psalm was written sometime near the fall of Jerusalem when all hope of restoration was lost.

⁵² Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.

Verse 52 is the closing doxology of *Book Three* of the Psalms (cf. Pss. 73-89; McNeill, *Hermeneutics*, p. 85). It has no connection or context with the rest of the psalm.

4. Songs of Zion (Wolvaardt, p. 231)

Psalm 87 (NIV)

Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm. A song.

¹He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; ²the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. ³Glorious things are said of you, O city of God: *Selah* ⁴“I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’” ⁵Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.” ⁶The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.” *Selah* ⁷As they make music they will sing, “All my fountains are in you.”

Psalm 122 (NIV)

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.” ²Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem. ³Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. ⁴That is where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel. ⁵There the thrones for judgment stand, the thrones of the house of David. ⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. ⁷May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” ⁸For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.” ⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

F. Wisdom Psalms (Wolvaardt, p. 231; *Hermeneutics*, p. 92)

Harman includes four characteristics of these psalms.

1. Concern for the practical issues of life
2. Clear distinction between the two ways which face us in life
3. Struggle with the problem of why the wicked seem to prosper as compared with the righteous
4. Hints that the final solution lies in the life to come

I would add another characteristic:

5. The law of sowing and reaping or retributive justice. There are blessings for the righteous and curses for the unrighteous—generally true in this life, but invariably true in the life to come.

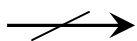
Psalm 37 (NIV) Of David.

¹**Do not fret**



because of *evil men*

OR **be envious**



of *those who do wrong*;

²FOR *like the grass*

⇒ *they will soon wither,*

like green plants

they will soon die away.

[a]

[b]

[a]

[b]

[c]

[d]

[c]

[d]

3. Struggle with the problem of why the wicked seem to prosper as compared with the righteous

5. The law of sowing and reaping or retributive justice.

Inclusion

¹⁰ A LITTLE WHILE,
and *the wicked* [a]
will be no more; [b]

THOUGH YOU LOOK FOR *them*,
they [a]
will not be found. [b]

Inclusion

¹¹ BUT *the meek* [c]
will inherit the land [d]
and enjoy great peace. [d]

¹² *The wicked* plot against the righteous [a]
AND gnash their teeth at them; [b]

¹³ BUT *the Lord* laughs at *the wicked*, [c]
FOR *he* knows *their day* is coming. [d]

¹⁴ *The wicked* draw the sword and bend the bow [a]
to bring down the poor and needy, [b]
to slay those whose ways are upright. [b]

¹⁵ BUT their swords [a]
will pierce *their own hearts*, [b]
AND their bows [a]
will be broken. [b]

Prov. 26: 27

Verse 9 marks the beginning of an *inclusion* which “includes” the contents of v. 10. Notice the repetition of the phrase, **will inherit the land**. The whole psalm should be read and preached as a single unit without dividing into parts.

As with so much **retributive justice** taught in the Bible, it does not seem to reconcile with the reality of daily life (compare the theology of **Proverbs** with the theology of **Ecclesiastes** and **Job**). Will the meek *really inherit the land and enjoy great peace*? This certainly does not seem to be the case in this world. See Waltke’s comments below. Notice, however, that the verbs **inherit** and **enjoy** are future, not present. The promises have a future orientation.

Enjoy great peace is a further development upon the theme of inheriting the land.

Verse 12 is an *ellipsis*—one part of the second line is omitted (usually the verb), but in this case the noun (**the wicked**). The *ellipsis* “binds two phrases more closely together” (Tremper Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*, p. 106).

3. Struggle with the problem of why the wicked seem to prosper as compared with the righteous
4. Hints that the final solution lies in the life to come—(v. 13), their day is coming, not has come.
5. Law of sowing and reaping or retributive justice—blessing and curse

To bring down and to slay are both purposes of the wicked; thus, I have placed a *purpose indicator symbol* below and above them.

Note the *antithetic parallels* throughout this psalm. **The wicked plot against the righteous but the Lord laughs at the wicked** while they plot. **The wicked** (implied subject) **gnash their teeth** at the righteous in anticipation (looking ahead) of harming them, but the Lord **laughs** in anticipation of harming the wicked. **Their day is coming** may be a reference to temporal punishment in this life, but most likely it is a reference to the final day of judgment in which retributive justice—the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6: 7-8; Ps. 1; Matt. 16: 27)—finds its

absolute fulfillment. Therefore, in the *wisdom psalms* as in *Proverbs*, we see a correction to Qohelet’s (the preacher’s) statement, “It is the **same** for **all**. There is **one fate** for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean...as it is for the good man, so it is for the sinner...” (Ecclesiastes 9:2 NASB; cf. Job 9: 22). Qohelet allowed the exceptions to the *rule*—the *rule* being **Psalm 1**—to dominate his thinking. But though we admit the exceptions, we live our lives according to *the general rule which on the day of judgment will become absolute—God will bless the righteous and punish the wicked.*

¹⁶ **Better** the little that the righteous have [a]
than the wealth of many *wicked*, [b]
¹⁷ **FOR** the power of the *wicked* will be broken, [b]
 ⇒
BUT the LORD upholds the *righteous*. [a]

4. Hints that the final solution lies in the life to come
 The student has probably noticed how much the *wisdom psalms* resemble the *Proverbs*. The *better-than proverbs* read exactly like this wisdom psalm (cf. Prov. 12: 9; 15: 1-16; 16:8; 17: 1; 19: 1; see also my *Wisdom Literature*.

¹⁸ The days of the blameless are known to the LORD,
 and their inheritance will endure forever.
¹⁹ In times of disaster they will not wither;
 in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.

5. Law of sowing and reaping or retributive justice
 (See Ps. 1: 6; Ps. 139: 1-2 for other examples of being **known** to the Lord. The Lord does not simply know *about* us, but *knows us intimately*.

²⁰ But the wicked will perish:
 The LORD’s enemies will be like the beauty of the fields,
 they will **vanish**—
vanish like smoke.

Verse 20b is an example of *climactic parallelism* or *repetitive parallelism*. For a better example, see p. 8 of your notes.

²¹ The wicked borrow and do not repay,
 but the righteous give generously;
²² those the LORD blesses will inherit the land,
 but those he curses will be cut off.
²³ If the LORD delights in a man’s way,

1. Concern for the practical issues of life
2. Clear distinction between the two ways which face us in life
 Examples of other proverbial sayings. For vv. 23-24, see Prov. 12: 28; 2: 21-22. *Wisdom psalms* read like the typical OT wisdom literature of *Proverbs*.

⇒
 [then—implied] he makes his steps firm;
 ⇒

V. 23—If...then conditional statement
 Vv. 24-25—Contra-expectation

²⁴ though he stumble, [yet—implied] he will not fall,
 ⇒ ⇒
 for the LORD upholds him with his hand.
 ⇒

2. Clear distinction between the two ways which face us in life
4. Hints that the final solution lies in the life to come. Obviously, there are exceptions to vv. 25-26 which should be understood; otherwise, all children begging bread would be considered the children of the wicked. Both verses use *hyperbole*—**never, always**. The general rule, however, should not be cast aside because of the exceptions. The righteous love their children more, and take better care of their children than the wicked. Further, as a general rule the righteous are those who are giving to others rather than receiving. However, this can be interpreted in a *relative* sense. The righteous can be both *receivers* from those who have more and *givers* to those who have less.

²⁵ [Although—implied] I was young and now I am old,
 ⇒ ⇒
 yet I have **never** seen the righteous forsaken
 ⇒ or **their children**
begging bread.

²⁶ They are **always** generous and lend freely;
 their children
will be blessed.

²⁷ Turn from evil and do good;
then you will dwell in the land forever.
²⁸ For the LORD loves the just
and will not forsake his faithful ones.
They will be protected **forever**,
but the offspring of the wicked will be **cut off**;
²⁹ the righteous will **inherit the land**
and dwell in it **forever**.
³⁰ The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom,
and his tongue speaks what is just.
³¹ The law of his God is in his heart;
his feet do not slip.

³² The **wicked** lie in wait for the **righteous**,
seeking their very lives;
³³ but the LORD will not leave them in their power
or let them be condemned when brought to trial.

³⁴ Wait for the LORD and keep his **way**.
He will exalt you to **inherit the land**;
when the wicked are **cut off**, you will see it.

³⁵ I have seen a wicked and ruthless man
flourishing like a green tree in its native soil,
³⁶ **but** he soon **passed away and was no more**;
though I looked for him, **he could not be found**.

³⁷ Consider the blameless, observe the upright;
there is a **future** for the **man of peace**.
³⁸ But all **sinners** will be destroyed;
the **future of the wicked will be cut off**.

³⁹ The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD;
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
⁴⁰ The LORD helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

Note the emphasis on being **cut off** from the land and **inheriting the land** (cf. vv. 9, 22, 28, 34, 38)

This is a reference to covenantal blessing or curse;
hence,

**5. Law of sowing and reaping or retributive justice—
blessing and curse** (cf. Deut. 27: 2-3; 28: 8, 20-21, 63;
Ex. 20: 12).

Living in the land of promise was symbolic of salvation
and blessing. Thus, to **inherit the land** and **dwell in it
forever** was interpreted as a blessing which transcended
earthly existence; therefore, **4. Hints that the final
solution lies in the life to come**

(For v. 30, see Prov. 10: 31; 18: 4; 2: 6)

**2. Clear distinction between the two ways which
face us in life**

**3. Struggle with the problem of why the wicked
seem to prosper as compared with the righteous**

**5. Law of sowing and reaping or retributive
justice—blessing and curse**

See vv. 2 and 10. Though they may flourish for a
while, they will soon wither. There is much
similarity here with Ps. 73: 1-20.

**2. Clear distinction between the two ways which
face us in life**

4. Hints that the final solution lies in the life to

Do these two verses promise more than they
can deliver? Some liberal scholars would say
so since it is evident that many righteous
people are **not** delivered from the wicked in
this life. See the lengthy quotation below from
Bruce Waltke on similar texts in *Proverbs*.

(“Does Proverbs Promise Too Much?”, *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 910-913, Bruce K. Waltke; bold italic emphasis, except for “*I AM*”, and bold italics in brackets are mine).

These heavenly promises of life, health, prosperity, and honor seem detached from earth’s harsh realities. The promises seem false to human experience under the sun, as Job (9:22-23) and Qoheleth (Eccl. 9: 2-3) complain, and contrary to sound doctrine. Eliphaz resolves the conflict by the doctrine of original sin (Job 4: 17), but the narrator of Job disallows the argument (1: 8), and so does *I AM [Yahweh]* (42: 7). Solomon, however, adds to the covenant obligation in Proverbs 3:1-10 that *I AM* disciplines those he loves (Prov. 3: 11-12), probably to motivate a person to keep his covenant obligations to make him or her fit to experience covenant blessings. If anyone should reckon that Solomon and other sages [*wise men*] are dullards [*stupid people*] who cannot see or think straight, let

them recall that keen observation and cogent reflection mark the sage. Kenneth Aitken takes an exceptional misstep when he suggests the sages were too optimistic in their promises: “There is a strong suspicion here Israel’s sages have confused their belief about what *ought to be the case with what actually is the case.*” Von Rad goes further, suggesting Qoheleth accuses the sages of so-called “old wisdom” of becoming “entangled in a single false doctrine.” James G. Williams shares that opinion: “His [Qoheleth’s] primary mode of presentation of contrasting proverbs... is in order to contradict traditional wisdom.” These solutions deconstruct with Proverbs, which calls for truthful speech, and the canon, and so undermine Christ’s and his apostles’ claims that all Scripture is inspired of God, who does not author confusion, and that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10: 35; 1 Cor. 14: 33; 2 Tim. 3: 16).

The popular evangelical solution that these are *probabilities*, not promises, though containing an element of truth, raises theological, practical, and psychological problems by stating the matter badly. According to this wording *the human partner is expected to keep his obligation perfectly* (Prov. 3: 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9), *but God may keep his imperfectly* (3:2, 4, 6, 8, 10). In truth, however, “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful” (2 Tim. 2: 13) [*but see Hendriksen’s interpretation of this NT passage*]. Moreover, a sober person would like to know the probabilities, and a psychologically well person could scarcely trust the *I AM* with all his heart (Prov. 3: 5), knowing God *usually, but not always*, keeps his obligations.

Other steps, however, can be taken toward a resolution. First, the promises are partially validated by experience. The sober, not the drunkard (cf. Prov. 23: 29-35), the cool-tempered, not the hothead (15: 18; 19: 19; 22:24; 29: 22), and the diligent, not the sluggard, usually experience health and wealth.

Second, the epigrammatic nature [*short and to the point*] of the proverbs often cause the audience to overlook the counterproverbs that qualify these promises. “There are many proverbs,” says Raymond Van Leeuwen, “that assert or imply that the wicked prosper... while the innocent suffer.”...The wicked has treasures gained by wickedness for a season (10: 2a), but they will not deliver him from death (10: 2b). At that time the wicked’s craving will be frustrated (10: 3b). In contrast, the righteous one who is afflicted at death will be delivered from death (10: 2b) and be fed (10: 3a). The several “better-than” proverbs assume the reality that at present the wicked have material presents and the righteous do not: “Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice” (cf. Prov. 16: 8, 19; 17:1; 19: 1, 22; 21: 9, 19; 22: 1: 25: 24; 28: 6; Ps. 37: 16; Eccl. 4: 6). *Without these qualifying sayings, one could legitimately accuse Solomon of being guilty of spouting half-truths.*

Third, the genre effect of being a primer [*a basic reader*] on morality for youth cause Proverbs *to focus on a future when the righteous rise, not on a present when they fall*: “For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down in calamity” (Prov. 24: 16). “Seven” symbolizes completeness, like the “count of ten” in boxing and the proverbial “nine lives” of a cat. In a word, “the righteous are regarded as knocked out for good.” Yet the saying throws away the harsh reality in a concessive clause for the greater reality that the righteous will rise. By contrast, the genre effect of *empiricism* cause Job and Ecclesiastes to focus on the sufferings of the righteous *before* they rise.

Finally, as pointed out above, the righteous rise in a blessed future that *outlasts death*. In addition to the exegetical arguments presented there, Proverbs’ concept of justice *demands such a hope*. Like so much of the Old Testament, the book of Proverbs is a masterpiece of indirection, preaching its message through the theological reflection of those with ears to hear. Instructively, the opening situation depicted in the father’s first lecture resembles the first situation of humanity outside of the Garden of Eden. Even as Cain murdered righteous Abel, sending him to a premature death, after which Cain lived out a normal life span, so the father represents a traveler’s “innocent blood” (Prov. 1: 11-19) as being dispatched to a premature death by venal sinners who walk on top of his grave and plunder his house. *These initial situations discredit the popular interpretation that life and death in Proverbs refer respectively to living to an old age and to a premature death. For*

justice to be done, as Proverbs assures it will be (e.g., 3: 31-35: 16: 4-5), Abel and the innocent traveler must be vindicated and delivered from death in a future that lies beyond their clinical deaths. If clinical death is the last word for the waylaid innocent, then the father's first lecture, along with other biblical stories about the deaths of martyrs, *deconstruct the Bible's claim that God upholds justice.* Kathleen A. Farmer rightly comments: "One either has to give up the idea of justice or one has to push its execution into some realm beyond the evidence of human experience." Obviously that future is not accessible to verification, as Jerry Gladson notes critically, but without that kind of faith one cannot please God. *If these promises could be validated by experience, why does the father command the son to trust in the I AM (3: 5)?*

If God rewarded virtue immediately, the son would *confound pleasure with piety*, using piety and ethics to satisfy his prurient [lustful] interests. He would substitute eudaemonism (i.e. the system of thought that bases ethics on personal pleasure) for the true virtues of faith, hope, and love. God develops the character of his saints by calling them to suffer for the sake of righteousness, while living in hope of eternal life. In this way he teaches them virtue while upholding justice (Rom. 5: 3-4; 2 Peter 2: 3-11).

In sum, Proverbs characterizes the wise as living by faith entirely ("with all your heart," 3: 5), exclusively ("lean not on your own understanding"), and exhaustively ("in all your ways acknowledge him," 3: 5-6a).

Make note of the other wisdom psalms listed in Wolvaardt and *Hermeneutics*, including Ps. 36, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128,

G. Songs of Trust and Confidence (Wolvaardt, p. 231; *Hermeneutics*, p. 90)

Harman lists the following characteristics of psalms of confidence and trust:

1. **While their structure is not the same they share a common content**
2. **In the face of enemies there is a calm trust in the Lord**
3. **Their declarations have a ring of certainty about them**
4. **They use a variety of metaphors to describe God ("refuge", "rock", "shepherd", "help", "portion", "cup").**

Psalm 23 (NIV)

A psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my *shepherd*, [4.]

I shall not be in want. [3.]

²He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters, [3.]

³*he restores my soul.*

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

I will fear no evil, *for you are with me*, your rod and your staff, they *comfort me.* [2.]

⁵**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.**

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. [4.]

⁶*Surely* goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, [3.]

and *I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Note the metaphor: **shepherd**. Notice also the phrases which indicate the certainty of the Lord's care and protection. (Those which are highlighted are not the only ones. They exist throughout the psalm.)

Psalm 16 (NIV)

A *miktam* of David.

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take *refuge*. [4.]

²I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."

³As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

⁴The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.
I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.

⁵*LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; [4.]*
you have made my lot secure.

⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance. [3.]

⁷I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸I have set the LORD always before me.
Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; [3.]
my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰***because you will not abandon me to the grave,***
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

¹¹You have made known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Refuge—one of the familiar metaphors of the psalms of confidence (cf. Ps. 11:1; Ps. 62 (below))

In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter quotes Ps. 16: 8-11 introducing the passage with, "David said about Him... (Acts 2: 25a). Notice that David has confidence and trust in God's goodness **beyond the grave. My body also will rest secure.** There is strong evidence here that he has hope in everlasting life which was a type of the hope that every believer now has.

Psalm 62 (NIV)

For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

My soul finds ***rest in God alone***, my salvation comes from him. ²He alone is **my rock and my salvation**; he is **my fortress**. I will never be shaken. ³How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down—this leaning wall, this tottering fence? ⁴They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place; they take delight in lies.

With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse. *Selah* ⁵***Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.*** ⁶He alone is **my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress**, I will not be shaken. ⁷**My salvation** and my honor depend on God; he is **my mighty rock, my refuge**. ⁸***Trust in him at all times***, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is **our refuge**. *Selah* ⁹Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath. ¹⁰Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. ¹¹One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, ¹²and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

Notice especially the metaphors for God in this psalm. Another thing to notice is the contrast between trusting in man or riches and trusting in God alone. Man is very often a very poor source of confidence and trust.

H. Imprecatory psalms

Imprecatory psalms will not be discussed here. See my *Hermeneutics*, pp. 94-98.

I. Combination of Categories

Some psalms cannot be classified within a single category but have significant elements of two or three categories. See *Hermeneutics*, p. 98.

III. Meaning Structure of the Psalms (p. 153, Wolvaardt)

Thus far we have concentrated our effort on identifying the parallels, stylistic features, and figurative language of the psalms. We will now concentrate on examining the entire structure of a psalm. To do this, we will use the *same procedure* as we did in our study of *Colossians*—identifying meaning blocks which make up strophes. Psalm 1 is examined in Wolvaardt. We will examine Psalm 2.

A. Meaning Blocks of Psalm 2

¹Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

A

The nations are planning something which will not succeed, so why do they even try?

²The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

B

World rulers—as representatives of the nations—make a collective attempt to resist the authority of God and His anointed king.

³“Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”

C

World rulers, and their nations, do not want to submit to God, His anointed king, or His law.

Make note of the fact that I have attempted to summarize each meaning block in *my own words*. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. If you cannot summarize meaning blocks in your own words rather than simply repeating the words of the text, you have not demonstrated that you really understand the text. In that case, you need to go back to step 3.2, *mark the meaning indicators*, and 3.3, *explain the meaning of words and phrases*.

⁴The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

D

God is amused that puny men would seriously believe that they could resist His sovereign rule over their lives and kingdoms. Their striving for independence appears absurd to God, who does not even bother to get up from His throne to see what the world rulers are doing (cf. NASB, **He who sits in the heavens laughs**).

⁵Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

E

We don’t know when, but at the hour of God’s choosing, He will have enough of man’s rebellion and will lash out at him with His terrible wrath. God the Father is angry with man for refusing His anointed king, Jesus Christ, whom He has already given universal dominion. He will not change His mind.

⁷I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

F

The psalmist will now reveal something the Lord decided in the past.

He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

G

The Lord decided to make the psalmist, David, His son. This is an expression of kingship. (As king, David is a type of Christ. See explanation below.)

⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

H

The Lord invites David, the psalmist, to request the nations and kingdoms of the world as a gift for his inheritance as king. (Once more, this should be understood typically of Christ).

⁹ You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

I

The chosen king will rule the nations with severe punishments for those who did not submit to his rule.

¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

J

Because God is angry with rebellious rulers, the leaders of this world should take the words of this psalm as a stern warning. They should be wise and listen to the following command.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

K

They should obey the Lord, fearing to displease Him; and they should rejoice at their abundant opportunity to serve Him as a world ruler, afraid to fail the Lord with their enormous responsibility.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.

L

World rulers and nations should bow to the Lord in humble worship so that His anger against their rebellion would be turned away. They should do this immediately; for at any time the Lord’s patience with them may end. If they refuse, their administrations and nations will fail; and, ultimately, they will be damned in hell.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

M

But any world ruler who submits to the Lord and depends on His protection will receive His blessings, blessings which will also be applied to the nation.

(Now we will examine the strophes. Rather than repeating the summaries above, I have provided a short commentary.)

B. Commentary on the Strophes of Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

³ “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”

A

This is the first unit of thought in the psalm. The translators of the NASB and the NIV have provided a space between v. 3 and 4 to show that the first strophe stops at v. 3 and a new one begins with v. 4, but the careful reader can see that a new thought begins in v. 4. God begins to laugh at the puny rebellion of world leaders.

God’s sovereign rule over men is not welcome, and they plot together to throw off God’s rule and live independently of God within their own domains. The initial question is rhetorical but the answer to it is not immediately evident. The psalmist is essentially asking, “What use is there to rebel against God’s authority? It is vain and futile to attempt the impossible!” Nevertheless, world rulers and leaders insist on something they can never have—independent authority.

⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord **scoffs** at them.

⁵ Then he **rebukes** them in his anger and **terrifies** them in his wrath, saying,

⁶ “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

B

God is not alarmed at man’s rebellion, but laughs at men’s efforts to throw off His sovereign rule over them. This an **anthropopathism**—ascribing to God the human emotion of mocking. The omnipotent God created man, and his rebellion is like an ant challenging an elephant.

Note the progressive parallels. God **scoffs...Then he rebukes...and terrifies**. This is not simple synonymous parallelism but is progressive and developing. He **scoffs, what's more, He rebukes, what's more, He terrifies**. In spite of man's desire to throw off God's rule, God has already **installed** His king on Zion. His coronation of Christ as king has already been accomplished, and the only thing left for human kings to do is to submit to His will—or else.

⁷ I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

He said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.

C

⁸ Ask of me,

and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

There is no mention of authorship for Ps. 2, but **Acts 4: 25** attributes the psalm to David. This is significant especially when interpreting v. 7. **The decree of the Lord** must then be the Lord's decree to David in 2 Sam. 7 to build him a house, a dynasty, which would be everlasting. **You are my son; today I have become your Father**, is first of all, then, a poetic repetition of 2 Sam. 7: 14a, “I will be his father, and he will be my son”, speaking of Solomon. But if this was true of Solomon, it was certainly true of David. David was in a very special sense, “the son [little “s”] of God”, that is, the earthly king in special relationship to Yahweh.

The phrase, **today I have become your Father** points to the *king's coronation ceremony* in which the human king, David (**He said to me**), is designated as a “son” in special relationship to God as a ruling, earthly monarch (king) (cf. F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 275-276; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, pp. 483-484). In Acts 4: 27, the companions of Peter and John apply this Psalm to Jesus, and Paul does the same in his address to the Jews in Psidian Antioch (Acts. 13: 33). **How, then, can the same words apply to Christ as they applied to David?** Although *eternally* the Son of God and pre-existent with the Father, Christ at His incarnation receives this special distinction as an *earthly* king in human flesh—something He had never been before.

The Apostle Paul seems to designate the time of this declaration (coronation) as Son at the resurrection (Rom. 1: 4), but we should understand the resurrection not so much as the *precise time* that Jesus became king so much as the *climax and vindication* of the coronation event. Christ “uttered his enthronement speech after his resurrection and before his ascension when he said, ‘To me all authority has been given in heaven and on earth’ (Matt. 28: 18)” (Kistemaker, p. 484). By rising from the dead, Christ was vindicated as the Son of God **He had always been and claimed to be**. Jesus is identified as the Son of God—or identifies Himself as the Son of God—**before His birth** (Lk. 1: 32), **at His birth** (Gal. 4: 4), **at His baptism** (Matt. 3: 17), **by Nathanael** (Jn. 1: 49), **at His temptation** (Mat. 4: 3, 6), **by Peter** (Matt. 16: 16), **at the transfiguration** (Matt. 17: 5), and **at His trial before the Sanhedrin** (Lk. 22: 70-71) (cf. *The Person of Christ*, Donald Macleod, pp. 90-92).

When David was anointed as king by Samuel, the Holy Spirit came upon him *in power* for the performance of his calling as king (1 Sam. 16: 13). Antotypically (as the antitype of David), Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit for His ministry during His baptism (Matt. 3: 16-17); and by considering both v. 16 and 17 together, we may conclude that the baptism of the Spirit was

the official coronation (crowning) of Christ as the divine-human king of Israel and the world. The resurrection, on the other hand, merely vindicated this fact. Verse 9 is not a description of Christ's rule over His people who have willingly surrendered to His grace and lordship. Rather, it is a description of His rule over those who *refuse* His lordship. At the final judgment, the rule of Christ will be known to all—both believer and sinner alike—and those who have not repented and believed will be broken **to pieces like pottery**—particularly *world rulers* who had the opportunity not only to believe the gospel, but to become an example of Christian justice and righteousness to their people, but failed to do so. In Daniel 2: 34-35, 44-45, the **stone cut out of the mountain without hands** crushes and destroys all competitive, earthly kingdoms.

¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.



¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

This is the last of four *strophes* in the psalm which consists of a main idea distinct (different) from the other strophes. Remember that the strophe in poetry is the same as a *paragraph* in narrative or exposition/exhortation genre. The main idea of this strophe is the opportunity for repentance granted to earthly rulers. *Two ways* are presented as options: either to **kiss the son** (upon the hem of his robe or upon the hand; Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 55), thus doing homage as a sign of surrender, or being **destroyed**. No other option is given. Their kingdoms hang by a single thread and may be dissolved in the Son's wrath at any time. Kings, presidents, and world leaders who bask in the glory of their power should rather **rejoice with trembling** at their opportunity to **serve the Lord** in such an influential capacity. Their power is not cause for pride and self-glory, but for fear and trembling at the gravity (graveness) of the responsibility (1 Cor. 2: 2-3).

Putting the ideas of the four strophes together, we have the following:

- A.** World leaders—representing the nations—foolishly attempt to maintain their authority independently of God and His law (vv. 1-3).
- B.** God will not allow world rulers to rule independently because He has already established the rule of Christ over the entire world (vv. 4-6).
- C.** According to the sure promises of God to David, God has granted victory over the kingdoms of this world to His Son, Jesus Christ, who will destroy all competitors to His throne (vv. 7-9).
- D.** Nevertheless, God offers the opportunity of repentance and surrender to all world rulers and nations. Either they worship Jesus Christ as the universal king, surrendering their claim to independence, or they will be swept away in the Son's wrath (vv. 1-12).

C. Stylistic Features of Psalm 2

¹Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
²The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD and against his Anointed One.
³“Let us break their chains,” they say,
“and throw off their fetters.”

⁴The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
⁵Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

⁷I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me,
“You are my Son; today I have become your Father.
⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

¹⁰Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
¹¹**Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.**
¹²**Kiss the Son, lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,**
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

A

As far as the structure is concerned, vv. 1-3 consist of what kings say about the Lord’s rule over them.
“We don’t want the Lord to rule over us!”

B

Verses 4-6 consist of what the Lord says to the kings about their rejection.
“I have already chosen my king, so get over it!”

Parallel strophes

B

Verses 7-9 consist of what the Lord says to His Son about the kings’ rejection.
“You will rule over them no matter what they say.”

A

Verses 10-12 consist of what the psalmist says to the kings about what they said earlier (v. 3) and about what the Lord says to them and to His Son in response (vv. 6-9).
“Surrender and worship...or perish!
Decide quickly; you don’t have much time!”

D. Sermon from Psalm 2

The **main idea** of a sermon could be the following:

World rulers should humble themselves by surrendering to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This brings up the following **question**: In consideration of their power and authority, **why should world leaders become Christians?** The **answer** to this question could make up the points of the sermon.

- I.** Any attempt to rule independently (or insubordinately) of Christ and His law is futile (useless) because Christ has already been crowned as the universal king (Strophes A and B; vv. 1-6).
- II.** The enthronement of Christ as king is the fulfillment of the ancient promise to David, king of Israel, and is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ who is now reigning over the world from heaven at the right hand of God the Father. (Dan. 2 would be a key text in developing this point.) (Strophe C; vv. 7-9)
- III.** Any attempt of world leaders to resist the authority of Christ over their administration will result in ruin—either in this life or in the life to come, or both. (Strophe D; vv. 1-12)
- IV.** Any leader who surrenders to Christ’s rule over his administration will be blessed, and the people of his country will be blessed through him. (Strophe D; vv. 10-12).

Of course, you could slice the cake much differently; this is only one possibility. You would also want to shorten the main headings to pithy (brief) statements which can be remembered. I have included long headings above only for explanation. Another possible outline would be the following:

- I. Kings rebel (from strophe A)
- II. God laughs (from strophe B)
- III. God decrees (from strophe C)
- IV. Kings tremble...or perish (from strophe D)

The student can see that a psalm, like the epistles of the NT, *should be examined from several different perspectives and angles*. You will discover something new from *each* angle. Furthermore, you will notice that the basic method of interpretation is the *same* as that of interpreting the epistles (see “The Steps of Exegesis”, p. 79, Wolvaardt; McNeill, *Biblical Interpretation—The New Testament Epistles*).

E. Meaning blocks in Psalm 34 (NIV)

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

¹I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.

A	David will never cease praising God.
---	--------------------------------------

²My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

B	David will also boast in the Lord’s goodness, and those who are in trouble will hear this boast and rejoice in the Lord.
---	--

³Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.

C	David invites others to give due weight to God’s attributes and to lift high the name of God in praise and worship.
---	---

End of first strophe <i>A—a call to praise</i>
--

⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears. [a]

D	David prayed for help, and the Lord rescued him from the things he feared.
---	--

⁵Those who look to him are radiant; [b]
their faces are never covered with shame.

E	Those who look to the Lord for help will smile, and they will never be ashamed because the Lord will not fail to answer their prayers.
---	--

⁶This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles. [a]

F	David’s humble cry for help (<u>This poor man</u>) was heard by the Lord, and the Lord rescued him.
---	---

⁷The angel of the LORD
encamps around those who fear him, [b]
and he delivers them.

G	God sends angels to protect those who believe in Him and obey Him. They encircle them and protect them from harm (cf. Ex. 23: 20; Heb. 1: 14).
---	--

End of second strophe <i>B—reasons for praise</i>

⁸Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

H	David invites those in trouble to put God to the test to see for themselves that He blesses those who trust Him..
---	---

⁹ Fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him lack nothing.



I

They are further invited to reverence the Lord—be in awe of Him. Those who worship Him will not lack.

¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

J

Although powerful lions lack food, those who look to the Lord for help will lack nothing they need.

End of third strophe *C—call to praise and reasons*

¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

K

David wishes to teach the Israelites (**my children**) the proper worship and reverence for God on the basis of (1) his personal experience of God's help and deliverance and (2) his understanding of the law of God (cf. Deut. 6: 2-5).

¹² Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,
¹³ keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking lies.
¹⁴ Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

L

Fullness and enjoyment in life will come to those who are faithful to the covenant (true believers) by loving others. **You shall not bear false witness** and **You shall not murder** are the two commandments brought to mind here. The commandments are summarized by “ ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.’ ” (Leviticus 19:18 NASB).

End of fourth strophe *D—a call to worship and reverence* rather than praise specifically (It includes a call to obedience. Thus, we can see that the *praise hymns* do not all fit a neat and predictable formula. Notice that the next strophe reads more like a *wisdom psalm*.)

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
¹⁶ the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

M

The Lord watches over true believers and hears their prayers, but He frowns upon those who do evil and will not give them an eternal future. (The blessing and curse of the covenant. See Ps. 1.)

End of fifth strophe *E—reasons for praise, worship, and reverence*

¹⁷ The righteous cry out,
and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

N

When in trouble, true believers cry for help, and the Lord responds to their prayers. He rescues them from their suffering either by getting them out of trouble **or** by giving them more grace to bear their suffering (v. 18).

End of sixth strophe *F—reasons for praise and worship*

¹⁹ A righteous man may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all;
²⁰ he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.

O

Believing in God will not free us from affliction and suffering, but the difference is that God will eventually—in the life to come—deliver us from every affliction. Even our physical bodies will be preserved for eternal life (cf. Ps. 51: 8; Jn. 19: 33).

End of seventh strophe *G—reasons for praise and worship*

²¹ Evil will slay the wicked;
the foes of the righteous will be condemned.

P

²² The LORD redeems his servants;
no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

Unbelievers will be put to death by their own unrighteousness, and the enemies of God's people will be declared guilty. But God will save those who serve him. He will not declare guilty those who put their trust in Him.

End of eighth strophe *H—reasons for worship, reverence, and praise* (again, similar to wisdom psalms)

For the meaning blocks above, I have provided more commentary than summary. Refer to the summaries for Psalm 2 for an example of how you should go about making summaries. Below, I have provided the summaries of the strophes while developing the meaning structure.

F. Stylistic Features of Psalm 34

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

¹ I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.

² My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

³ *Glorify the LORD with me;*
let us exalt his name together.

Call to praise

I will continually praise the Lord; therefore, *praise and glorify the Lord with me*, giving Him the *weight* (glory) which is due to His name. You should do this **because...**

Note the **imperative** verbs indicating the obligation of praise. Praise is not optional.

⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ *Those who look to HIM are radiant;*
their faces are never covered with shame.

⁶ This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the LORD
encamps around *those who fear HIM*,
and HE delivers them.

Reason for praise

...I have personally experienced the Lord's help in the past—help which gives me the certainty of His help in the present and future. He even sends His angels to guard us. **Therefore...**

Note the **past and present** verbs indicating past petitions, answered prayers, and present help from the Lord. We have many reasons to praise Him.

⁸ *Taste and see that the LORD is good;*
blessed is *the man who takes refuge* in HIM.

⁹ *Fear the LORD, you his saints,*

Call to praise

...**put the Lord to the test for yourself.** Prove Him, even as I have done, and you will see that what I am saying is true. You should reverence the Lord **because...**

Note the **imperative** verbs.

for *those who fear* HIM lack *nothing*.

→
10 The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but *those who seek* the LORD lack *no good thing*.

B

Reason for praise

...the one who reverences Him, seeks Him, and trusts Him is blessed and will lack nothing he needs. **However...**

Present tense verbs showing present provision

11 *Come, my children, listen to me;*

I will teach you the **fear** of the LORD.

12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, [then—implied]

13 *keep your tongue from evil*

→
and [keep—implied] your lips *from speaking lies*.

A

Call to worship and reverence through obedience

...let me tell you how to sincerely reverence the Lord: **Keep His commandments** by guarding your tongue, by being truthful with your neighbor, by seeking peace and reconciliation rather than revenge, and by being kind to him...

Imperative verbs showing obligation.

14 *Turn from evil and do good;*

→
seek peace and pursue it.

The condition of loving life and seeing many good days is to keep the covenant. There is no sure covenant blessing without obedience. Verse 12-13 is a subtle if...then statement. **But how can we keep His commandments? Extreme self-effort? No, but by believing in His abundant grace to change us. Only by His continuing grace working in us can we hope to become in practice what we are in position (Phil. 2: 12-13).**
Note further that there is no contradiction between **fearing** the Lord and **praising** the Lord. Any attempt to praise the Lord without godly fear and keeping His commandments is hypocrisy, not praise.

Reason for praise

...because the Lord watches over those who *sincerely* fear Him by keeping His commandments (vv. 13-14), and He listens carefully to their prayers. **But** the Lord frowns upon those who practice evil. They have no future on earth. **Furthermore.....the Lord listens to the righteous**, and He rescues them from every difficulty. He is intimate with them and will save them eternally and completely—both body and soul. **On the other hand...**

15 The EYES OF THE LORD are on the *righteous*

and HIS EARS are attentive to *their* cry;

16 THE FACE OF THE LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

17 The *righteous* cry out, and THE LORD hears them; HE delivers them from all *their* troubles.

18 THE LORD is close to the *brokenhearted* and saves those who are *crushed in spirit*.

19 A *righteous man* may have many troubles, but THE LORD delivers him from them all;

[furthermore...]
20 he protects all his bones,

[furthermore...]
not one of them will be broken.

B

Verses 19-20 is developing parallel. Note the interpretive comment “furthermore”.

Typology—(cf. John 19: 36). The deliverance of Christ is also typological for the ultimate deliverance of all believers.

Verses 19 is an antithetic parallel. Note the **but**. Verse 20 is synonymous. **All** and **not one**.

21 Evil *will slay* the wicked; [a]
 the foes of the righteous *will be condemned*. [b]

22 THE LORD *redeems* his servants; [a]
 no one *will be condemned* who takes refuge in him. [b]

B
cont.

...the unrighteous, whose wicked lives prove that they do *not* fear the Lord, will perish because of their own deeds, and they will be condemned because they do not seek their safety in God. But the Lord saves those who serve Him and who trust Him for their protection.

In the meaning structure suggested above for Ps. 34, **A** represents the commands made to believers to praise, worship, reverence (fear), and obey the Lord. **B** represents the promises to believers for their ultimate, eternal deliverance from affliction, their daily provision, the Lord’s answers to their prayers, and His intimate presence with them. Embedded in **B** is the sad, horrible fate of those who do not fear the Lord and don’t obey Him—condemnation, lack of any future, God’s disapproval. Therefore, the psalmist gives his audience **both positive and negative** reasons for praising the Lord. On the positive side are the blessings and protection for the righteous; on the negative side are the curses upon the wicked. The blessings and curses are evidence of the covenantal structure for the psalms.

Interpreting Proverbs

Almost all of the *wisdom literature* of the Bible is poetry. A few exceptions are found in Job 1—2 and 42: 7-17 which are written in narrative. The rest of the book is poetry. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (except 12: 9-14), *Song of Songs, and the wisdom psalms* are poetry. As in the *Psalms*, the poetry in all *wisdom* books is interpreted the *same* way, through a careful examination of the parallels, figurative language, meaning structure, etc. Proverbs 1 is the thematic introduction to the book, so this may be a good place to start with our analysis of *Proverbs*.

I. Meaning Indicators and Stylistic Features for Proverbs 1 (NIV)

(1) ¹The *proverbs* of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Inclusion

Verses 1-7 serve as the *title* and *preamble* to *Collection I* of the book of Proverbs (see outline)

- (2) ² for **attaining** [a]
 ⇒ *wisdom and discipline,* [b]
- (3) for **understanding** [a]
 ⇒ *words of insight,*³ [b]
- (4) for **acquiring** [a]
 ⇒ *a disciplined and prudent life,* [b]
- (5) [*for—implied*] **doing** [a]
 ⇒ *what is right and just and fair;* [b]

This is series of synonymous parallels, but very proverb pair has a distinct emphasis and does not say exactly the same thing as the other pairs. **Wisdom and discipline, words of insight** are the means to a **disciplined and prudent life and doing what is right and just and fair**. Therefore, L2-3 emphasize the knowledge itself while L4-5 emphasize the expected results of this knowledge.

(18)¹⁰ **My son,** if sinners *entice you,*
 (19) [then—implied] **do not give in to them.**
 (20)¹¹ If they *say, "Come along with us;*
 (21) **LET'S lie in wait for someone's blood,**
 (22) **LET'S waylay some harmless soul;**
 (23) ¹²**LET'S swallow them alive,**
 (24) **and whole,**
 (25)¹³ **we will get all sorts of valuable things**
 (26) **and fill our houses with plunder;**
 (27)¹⁴ **throw in your lot with us,**
 (28) **and we will share a common purse"—**
 (29)¹⁵ [then—implied] **my son, do not go along with them,**
 (30) **do not set foot on their paths;**
 (31)¹⁶ for their feet **rush** into sin,
 they **are swift** to shed *blood.*
 (32)¹⁷ **How useless to spread a net in full view**
of all the birds!
 (33) ¹⁸These men **lie in wait** for *their own blood;* [e]
 (34) they **waylay only themselves!** [e]

Lines 20-24 is a *climactic* or *staircase* parallel which uses the repetitive phrase, **let's** (a contraction of **let us**).

[b] ← See L29-30 for more negative commands

[a] Notice the progression here—**Come along with us**, what is more, **Let's lie in wait...** what is more, **Let's waylay...** what is more, **Let's swallow them alive...** what is more, **Let's swallow them alive whole.**

[a] *like the grave,* [c]

[a] *like those who go down to the pit;* [c]

[a] L24 is an *ellipsis* in which **let's swallow them** is omitted but implied.

[a] All the [a]'s refer to the **enticements** of the gang. The [b]'s are the commands of the father not to follow the gang. The [c]'s are similes.

[b] See L19 for the first negative command.

[d] Note the parallelism of **do not go along, do not set foot on their paths, their feet rush, they are swift**—all implying the persistent activity of sin.
 [e]

[f] **Feet** is a *synecdoche*, a part representing the whole. The feet represent the whole person.

Line 32—a *metaphorical* expression forming an **antithetical parallel** with L33-34. The "yet" is implied on L33. Dim-witted birds (ever hear the expression, "bird-brain"?) are not sufficiently stupid to fall into a trap laid for them by the fowler while they are looking. Yet, the thieves wait for their own blood. In other words, they lay a trap for themselves in **their own full view** and then fall into it!

(35)¹⁹ **Such is the end** [a]
of all who go after ill-gotten gain; [b]

(36) **it takes away the lives** [a]
of those who get it. [b]

End of fourth strophe

Note the preposition, **of** which is a *syntactical indicator* showing the relationship between the parts of a sentence (Wolvaardt, p. 150).

(37)²⁰ *Wisdom calls aloud* [a]
 in the street, [b]

(38) *she raises her voice* [a]
 in the public squares; [b]

The *First Interlude* to the father's ten lectures. An interlude is a pause between two acts of a play—in this case, a pause between *Lecture 1* and *Lecture 2* from the father.

(39) ²¹ *at the head of the noisy streets* [b]
she cries out, [a]

I have represented **wisdom** by also the symbol for the gospel.

(40) *in the gateways of the city* [b]
she makes her speech: [a]

End of fifth strophe

Wisdom is *personified* by a woman crying out in the public streets. L37-40 is an **abab-baba** chiasm. By using a chiasmic structure, Solomon **emphasizes** two different elements: (1) Wisdom's **activity** is emphasized with four verb phrases—**calls aloud, raises her voice, cries out, makes her speech**. She wants to be heard and is not ashamed of what she wants to say. (2) Her public presence is emphasized. She is at the busiest intersections of the city and at the gate. In other words, wisdom is not hidden away in some dark corner where men can never find her. She is in every place where people are gathered. She cannot be avoided by people who will wish to claim innocence by saying, "I never heard her voice!"

(41)²² **"HOW LONG will you simple ones** [a]
love your simple ways? [b]
 →

(43) **HOW LONG will mockers** [a]
delight in mockery [b]
 →

(45) **and [how long will—implied] fools** [a]
hate knowledge? [b]
 →

Wisdom now begins her speech. Note the quotation marks. **How long** is the beginning of wisdom's *lament*. She *complains* about simple-minded people and those who mock wisdom. L45 is another *ellipsis* which omits the words **how long will** which are implied in the sentence. **Simple ones, mockers, and fools** are progressive terms indicating a progression into a sinful lifestyle. The **simple ones** are gullible and easily influenced by the **mockers** and **fools** who are entrenched in their rebellion against God.

- (47) ²³ **If** you had responded to my rebuke,
 (48) [then—implied] I would have poured out my heart to you
 (49) **AND** [I would have—implied] made my thoughts known to you.
 (50) ²⁴ **But since** you rejected me when I called
 (51) **AND** no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,
 (52) ²⁵ **since** you ignored all my advice
 (53) **and** would not accept my rebuke.

Verse 23 illustrates the difficulty in translating Hebrew. The NASB reads, “Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.”

Since is a reason indicator. **Since** something happened, then something else will happen.

The NIV has made v. 23 into an **if...then** statement. For this reason, I have shown the action of the verbs to be uncertain or contingent. In other words, something must happen in order for something else to happen. Wisdom **would have** revealed her thoughts **if** men **would have responded** to her and not **rejected her**. But they rejected her, resulting in the consequences in L54-62. Note the syntactic indicators **if, and, but since, and** which show the relationships within the verses. The verbs **called** and **stretched out** are past tense, indicating that wisdom’s invitation had been rejected thus far. However, wisdom still hopes for a change of heart from her audience (v. 33).

- (54) [then—implied] ²⁶ I in turn will laugh [a]
 at your disaster; [b]
 (55) I will mock [a]
 when calamity overtakes you— [c]
 (56) ²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, [d]
 (57) when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, [d]
 (58) when distress and trouble overwhelm you. [c]
- End of sixth strophe
- emphasis
- Climactic parallel with emphasis at the end of L56 and L57—like a storm, like a worldwind

Chiasm **cdcc** of L55-58 is based on the verbs **overtakes** and **overwhelm** and on the similes, **like a storm** and **like a whirlwind**.

(59)²⁸ **Then** they will call to me [a]
 (60) but I will not answer; [b]
 (61) they will look for me [a]
 (62) but will not find me. [b]

Parallelism **abab** of L59-62 is based on affirmative verbs **will call** and **will look** and on the negated verbs **will not answer** and **will not find**. It is also based on the conjunction, **but**, in L60 and 62.

(63)²⁹ **Since** they hated knowledge [a] See v. 1
 (64) and did not choose to fear the LORD, [b]
 (65)³⁰ **since** they would not accept my advice [b] or ?
 (66) and spurned my rebuke, [a]

L63-66 is either a chiasm or parallelism depending on how you look at it. **Hated** and **spurned** are synonymous verbs, and **did not choose** and **would not accept** are both negated verbs and are synonymous. However, the syntactical indicators **since** and **and** are in **abab** parallel.

L63 begins a **since...then** reason statement (**then** is omitted but is implied in L67)

(67)³¹ [**then**—implied] they will eat the fruit of their ways [a]
 (68) and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. [b]
 (69)³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, [c]
 (70) and the complacency of fools will destroy them; [d]

The law of sowing and reaping which occurs throughout *Proverbs*.

(71)³³ but **whoever** listens to me will live in safety
 (72) and [**will**—implied] be at ease, without fear of harm.”

will be filled goes beyond **will eat**. Thus, synonymous parallels are usually more than simple repetitions of ideas. A more accurate interpretation is **A, what is more...B**. This parallel could be interpreted, **they will eat...what's more, they will be filled** (or gorged to the point of being sick). The same could be said of L69-70. **will destroy them** expresses an eternal punishment beyond **will kill them** which is temporal.

End of seventh strophe

II. Meaning of words and phrases (Step 3.3 Wolvaardt, p. 79) and Meaning Blocks of Proverbs 1 (Step 3.4 Wolvaardt, p. 79)

We will accomplish both steps simultaneously by developing the meaning blocks in Proverbs 1.

(1) The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

- (2)² for attaining **wisdom** and **discipline**;
 (3) for understanding words of insight;
 (4)³ for acquiring a disciplined and **prudent** life,
 (5) doing what is right and just and fair;

A

Studying the proverbs of Solomon is for the purpose of acquiring (getting) practical knowledge (**wisdom**) producing an orderly (**disciplined**) and sensible (**prudent**) life which is just and fair.

- (6)⁴ for giving **prudence** to the **simple**,
 (7) knowledge and discretion to the young—
 (8)⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning,
 (9) and let the discerning get guidance—
 (10)⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables,
 (11) the sayings and riddles of the wise.

B

The proverbs make simple-minded people and young people wise. Furthermore, people who are already wise are invited to become even wiser. Those who make careful judgments (**the discerning**) are invited to get further instruction (**guidance**) for making good judgments by learning to interpret the proverbs. (The omission of the mocker and the fool in this introduction is significant. See below).

End of first strophe

- (12)⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
 (13) but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

C

A person begins to acquire wisdom by worshiping God and accepting His law, but fools hate God's law and His discipline (cf. the synonymous parallel in Ps. 19: 7-9; see also Bruce Waltke, *Proverbs*, I. pp. 100-101).

End of second strophe

- (14)⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
 (15) and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
 (16)⁹ They will be a garland to grace your head
 (17) and a chain to adorn your neck.

D

Do not turn away from your father's and mother's teaching. If properly applied, our teaching will adorn your life with honor and respect.

End of third strophe

- (18)¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you,
 (19) do not give in to them.

E

Son, don't follow the crowd, no matter how much it promises you.

- (20)¹¹ If they say, "Come along with us;
 (21) let's lie in wait for someone's blood,
 (22) let's waylay some harmless soul;
 (23)¹² let's swallow them alive, like the grave,
 (24) and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
 (25)¹³ we will get all sorts of valuable things
 (26) and fill our houses with plunder;
 (27)¹⁴ throw in your lot with us,
 (28) and we will share a common purse"—

F

Some people will promise you success through injustice and fraud, even murder. They will pretend to offer you community and belonging through crime and wrongdoing. (It should be noted here that the father describes the activity of the unrighteous in the worst possible terms using **hyperbole** to describe **any** kind of injustice toward others as a means of financial gain. There are more subtle forms of injustice that are also condemned—"little white lies" and character assassination through slander.)

- (29)¹⁵ my son, do not go along with them, **G**
 (30) do not set foot on their paths;
 (31)¹⁶ for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood.

Don't throw in your lot with people who compromise biblical principles for material gain. Such people violate God's law without thinking of the consequences.

- (32)¹⁷ How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds!
 (33)¹⁸ These men lie in wait for their own blood; **H**
 (34) they waylay only themselves!
 (35)¹⁹ Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
 (36) it takes away the lives of those who get it.

Even stupid birds have sense enough not to fall into a trap they have seen laid for them, but sinners cannot understand that the trap they lay for others will become their own ruin.

End of fourth strophe

- (37)²⁰ Wisdom calls aloud in the street,
 (38) she raises her voice in the public squares; **I**
 (39)²¹ at the head of the noisy streets she cries out,
 (40) in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:

God's wisdom through His word and through creation is being proclaimed in every place men live and work, so that no one can claim they have never heard it (cf. Rom. 1: 18-32).

End of fifth strophe

- (41)²² "How long will you simple ones
 (42) love your simple ways? **J**
 (43) How long will mockers
 (44) delight in mockery
 (45) and fools
 (46) hate knowledge?"

How long will you simple-minded people enjoy following the crowd? How long will you mockers enjoy ridiculing the law of God? How long will you fools hate the knowledge of God and everything which is good? (**How long?** indicates that their rebellion against wisdom has been persistent, probably from their youth (Waltke, *Proverbs*, I. pp. 202-203).

Note: In summarizing meaning blocks, you are also explaining words and phrases in your own words. You are trying to understand the text and make it plain to your audience by *paraphrasing*; you are not offering an alternative translation. Therefore, you have a certain degree of liberty in your summary.

- (47)²³ If you had responded to my rebuke,
 (48) I would have poured out my heart to you **K**
 (49) and made my thoughts known to you.

Wisdom will come to anyone who submits himself to God's sovereignty over his life.

- (50)²⁴ But since you rejected me when I called
 (51) and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,
 (52)²⁵ since you ignored all my advice
 (53) and would not accept my rebuke, **L**
 (54)²⁶ I in turn will laugh at your disaster;
 (55) I will mock when calamity overtakes you—
 (56)²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
 (57) when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
 (58) when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

The mocker and the fool have rejected wisdom; therefore, wisdom will reject them on the day of calamity. Stated another way, **since** fools have mocked wisdom, **then** wisdom will mock them. L50-53 is the **premise** of a conditional statement. L54-58 is the **conclusion**. **Since** the premise is true—fools have rejected wisdom—**then** the conclusion is also true—wisdom will mock them.

End of sixth strophe

Further commentary on vv. 24-27.

If a person rejects the Lord in this life, the Lord will also reject him at death. Since he mocked the Lord in this life, the Lord will also mock him at death. The rejection by the Lord must be a reference to death. Every man has the opportunity to respond positively to either special or general revelation while he is living, but at death, his pleas for help will fall on deaf ears. However, there may come a time in a man's life when he is *no longer potentially receptive to God's invitation*. This is represented by the **mock**er and the **fool** who have gone beyond the resistance of the **simple one** or gullible person. The mocker and fool may represent persons who have gone *beyond the possibility of repentance*. In vv. 24-27, there seems to be the certainty and finality of judgment based on the finality of their rejection of wisdom.

The *mock*er and the *fool* have not rejected wisdom once or twice when she called to them, but repeatedly their whole lives. In his analysis of the mocker and the fool in *Proverbs*, Waltke holds out *no hope* for their restoration—unlike the gullible (**simple ones**), who may be influenced to turn from his foolishness to wisdom (Waltke, *Proverbs*, pp. 203, 112-114). As indicated above, the purpose of the proverbs is to make the **simple** wise and the **wise** even wiser, but nothing is said about the benefit of the proverbs to the **mock**er and the **fool**.

(59)²⁸ “Then they will call to me
(60) but I will not answer;
(61) they will look for me
(62) but will not find me.

M

When the final disaster of death comes upon those who reject God's wisdom, God will not answer their cries for mercy. Although they will look to Him for help, He will not show Himself. (Once again, this is not the cry of true repentance—which God will always hear—but the cry for mercy when the final disaster, death, has come.)

(63)²⁹ Since they hated knowledge
(64) and did not choose to fear the LORD,
(65)³⁰ since they would not accept my advice
(66) and spurned my rebuke,
(67)³¹ they will eat the fruit of their ways
(68) and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

N

Since they did not listen to the law of God or fear His reproof, they will finally suffer the eternal consequences of their own sinful lifestyles. The eternal law of **sowing and reaping** will be fulfilled in their judgment.

(69)³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
(70) and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

O

In the end, their doom is well-deserved, for they have brought their judgment upon themselves.

(71)³³ but whoever listens to me will live in safety
(72) and be at ease, without fear of harm.”

P

Whoever responds to the wisdom of God through repentance and faith will be saved.

End of seventh strophe

III. Sermon on Proverbs 1: 2-6

The title of the sermon could be: *Why should we study the proverbs?* The *answer* to this question could be *three parts* of the sermon:

I. Because the proverbs impart the knowledge necessary for living successfully

- A. By imparting practical knowledge
- B. By developing discipline and order
- C. By developing good sense

II. Because the proverbs are an important means to practical obedience

- A. In living a disciplined life of sound judgment
- B. In living a just and fair life

III. Because the proverbs are for everyone

- A. For simple-minded people and young people who lack experience
- B. For experienced people who already have much wisdom.

To fill out the sermon, various proverbs could be used to illustrate all the sub-points in the outline (A's, B's, and C). *Proverbs* speaks extensively on the subjects of discipline, sound judgment, justice and fairness, wisdom, and youth. You could use an exhaustive concordance or the cross references in your study Bibles.

IV. Stylistic Features in the Meaning Blocks of Proverbs 1**Proverbs 1 (NIV)**

(1) The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

- (2)² for attaining wisdom and discipline;
 (3) **for understanding words of insight**;
 (4)³ for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
 (5) doing what is right and just and fair;

A

The purpose of the proverbs—attaining knowledge which leads to practical godliness and a good life

- (6)⁴ for giving prudence to **the simple**,
 (7) knowledge and discretion to **the young**—

B

The purpose of the proverbs to specific audiences—to make the simple and the young wise and to make the wise and the discerning even wiser

- (8)⁵ let **the wise** listen and add to their learning,
 (9) and let **the discerning** get guidance—

B

The purpose of gaining knowledge—to get more knowledge leading to a good life

- (10)⁶ **for understanding proverbs and parables**,
 (11) **the sayings and riddles of the wise**.

A

- (12)⁷ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,*
 (13) *but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Introduction to the two ways which are described in the following verses—the way of the father's and mother's instruction or the way of the gang.

- (14)⁸ **Listen, my son, to your father's instruction**
 (15) **and do not forsake your mother's teaching.**
 (16)⁹ **They will be a garland to grace your head**
 (17) **and a chain to adorn your neck.**

D

The father promises *wisdom's reward* of blessing in *private*. Synonymous with Lady Wisdom's call in *public places* (L37-40).

- (18) ¹⁰ ***My son, if sinners entice you,***
 (19) ***do not give in to them.***

D
cont.

The father's first warning to the son against following the gang. Synonymous with *Lady Wisdom's warning to the simple ones* in the streets (L41-46).

Inclusion

- (20) ¹¹ If they say, "***Come along with us:***
 (21) ***let's*** lie in wait for someone's blood,
 (22) ***let's*** waylay some harmless soul;
 (23) ¹² ***let's*** swallow them alive, like the grave,
 (24) and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
 (25) ¹³ we will get all sorts of valuable things
 (26) and fill our houses with plunder;
 (27) ¹⁴ ***throw in your lot with us,***
 (28) and we will share a common purse"—

E

The deeds of the gang are synonymously parallel with *their rejection of wisdom* (L47-53). *The promise of easy money* is antithetically parallel with *the certainty of judgment* in L31-36. (Note the highlighted words in L21-22 and their parallels in L33-34.) Further, the promises of easy money correspond to the father's promise of the blessings of wisdom (L16-17).

Inclusion

- (29) ¹⁵ ***my son, do not go along with them,***
 (30) ***do not set foot on their paths;***

D

The father's *second warning to the son against following the gang* followed by his reasons in L31-36.

- (31) ¹⁶ for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood.
 (32) ¹⁷ How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds!
 (33) ¹⁸ These men lie in wait for their own blood;
 (34) they waylay only themselves!
 (35) ¹⁹ Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
 (36) it takes away the lives of those who get it.

E

The certainty of judgment antithetically parallel with *the promise of easy money* in L20-28. While lying in wait for someone else's blood, the gang is actually lying in wait **for their own blood** (L21-22).

- (37) ²⁰ *Wisdom calls aloud in the street,*
 (38) *she raises her voice in the public squares;*
 (39) ²¹ *at the head of the noisy streets she cries out,*
 (40) *in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:*
 (41) ²² *"How long will you simple ones*
 (42) *love your simple ways?*
 (43) *How long will mockers*
 (44) *delight in mockery*
 (45) *and fools*
 (46) *hate knowledge?*

C

Lady Wisdom warns the simple ones, mockers, and fools in the streets. Synonymous with *the father's warning the son in private* (L14-17).

As the *father calls* to his son in *private* (L14-17), *Lady Wisdom calls* to the simple in *public places* (cf. Waltke).

(47)²³ If you had responded to my rebuke,
 (48) I would have poured out my heart to you
 (49) and made my thoughts known to you.
 (50)²⁴ But since you rejected me when I called
 (51) and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,
 (52)²⁵ since you ignored all my advice
 (53) and would not accept my rebuke, E
 (54)²⁶ I in turn will laugh at your disaster;
 (55) I will mock when calamity overtakes you—
 (56)²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
 (57) when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
 (58) when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

The rejection of wisdom is synonymously parallel with *the deeds of the gang* (L20-28). *The certainty of judgment for the rejection of wisdom* is synonymously parallel to *the certainty of judgment for the deeds of the gang* (L31-36). The temporal outcome of rejecting wisdom is a lifestyle of sin—the deeds of the gang—which deserve judgment. This is the *law of sowing and reaping—the deed-outcome relationship* between sin and judgment.

(59)²⁸ *“Then they will call to me*
 (60) *but I will not answer;*
 (61) *they will look for me*
 (62) *but will not find me.*

C

Lady Wisdom *called out to unrepentant sinners* in the streets and was rejected. No one listened. At the final disaster—death—*unrepentant sinners call out to Lady Wisdom*, but she rejects them and does not answer them.

(63)²⁹ Since they hated knowledge
 (64) and did not choose to fear the LORD,
 (65)³⁰ since they would not accept my advice
 (66) and spurned my rebuke, E
 (67)³¹ they will eat the fruit of their ways
 (68) and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.
 (69)³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
 (70) and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

The law of *sowing and reaping*—the *deed-outcome* relationship between sin and judgment. L67-70 are synonymous with L33-36.

(71)³³ *but whoever listens to me will live in safety*
 (72) *and be at ease, without fear of harm.”*

C

As the father promises **blessing** to the son if he will listen to instruction, so Lady Wisdom promises **protection and salvation** . The *law of sowing and reaping*—the *deed-outcome* relationship between listening to wisdom and receiving salvation.

The stylistic arrangement in Prov. 1: 1-33 is, therefore, ABBA, DEDECECEC. The important thing is seeing the interchange between the father’s commands to the son in contrast to the gang, wisdom’s public speech, and the consequences of the gang’s actions.

V. Outline of Collection I of Proverbs

The following is an outline of **Collection I** of *Proverbs* adapted from Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*. For a concise commentary on the Proverbs see my *Wisdom Literature*.

Collection I (1:1—9: 18)

Collection I sets the context for the entirety of the book and is made up of extended poems in praise of wisdom which serve to motivate the reader to receive the wisdom offered in all seven collections (Waltke, p. 10).

A. Title with Preamble (1: 1-7)

1. Title (1: 1)

2. Preamble (1: 2-7)

B. Prologue (1: 8—8:36)

1. Lecture 1: Exhortation to listen and to reject the gang's invitation (1: 8-19)

[First Interlude: Wisdom's rebuke of the gullible (1: 20-33)]

2. Lecture 2: Safeguard against the wicked (2: 1-22)

3. Lecture 3: The Lord's promises and the son's obligations (3: 1-12)

4. Lecture 4: The value of wisdom (3: 13-35)

5. Lecture 5: Get the family heritage (4: 1-9)

6. Lecture 6: Stay off the wrong way (4: 10-19)

7. Lecture 7: Don't swerve from the right way (4: 20-27)

8. Lecture 8: The folly of adultery and the wisdom of marriage (5: 1-23)

[Appendix: Three inferior types of men (6: 1-19)]

9. Lecture 9: The high price of an unchaste wife (6: 20-35)

10. Lecture 10: The unchaste wife's seductive tactics (7: 1-27)

[Second Interlude: Wisdom's self-praise to the gullible (8: 1-36)]

C. Epilogue: Rival banquets of wisdom and folly (9: 1-18)

Waltke offers the following **chiastic** arrangement for Collection I (*Proverbs*, Vol. I. p. 12).

A—Rival invitations of the father and the gang to the son	1: 8-19
B—Wisdom's rebuke of the gullible	1:20-33
C—Janus: The father's command to heed teaching as a safeguard against evil men and the unchaste wife	2: 1-22
D—The father's commands to heed teaching	3:1—4:27
D'—The father's warnings against the unchaste wife	5: 1—6:35
C'—Janus: The father's warnings against Wisdom's rival	7:1-27
B'—Wisdom's invitation to the gullible	8:1-36
A'—Rival invitations of Wisdom and the foolish woman to the gullible	9:1-18

(A *janus* is a transition saying which looks *backward* to what has been said before and *forward* to what is going to be said afterwards. Incidentally, Waltke calls the structure of Proverbs 1: 1—

9: 1-18 a *concentric* pattern, not a *chiastic* pattern (I. p. 12). In his terminology, a *concentric* pattern is **ABCCBA** while a *chiastic* pattern is **ABCXCBA** with a middle element (I. p. 47). Thus, there are differences among scholars about the definitions of stylistic features, but this should not concern you. The important thing is to see the patterns regardless of what you wish to call them. Understand, however, that there are chiastic patterns with a middle element.)