

Wisdom, Kingship, and Salvation: A Window Into the Psalms

Psalms 1 and 2 | 07.02.2017 | The Psalms @OBC

Imagine that you have been given a large plot of ground.

Maybe it's the wide open spaces of Montana . . . or something in the hills of TN.

Whatever it is . . . it's a beautiful but foreign landscape that you must now settle.

In settling that land . . . what is your first step?

Do you start building home . . . in the first place you see?

Or do you take the time to survey the property before determining your residence?

I'm by no means an expert here . . . but I would expect you'd survey the land FIRST. . .
. mark out its dimensions and details . . . and THEN you would draw up a plan.

When it comes to reading the land . . . this is the wise practice – survey first, build second.

Well . . . I want to contend . . . the same principle should be applied to the Bible.

Before drilling down in any one place, we should understand the lay of the land.

We should know if we are in the Old Testament or the New.

We should be aware of what covenant is in place – be it Abraham's, or David's, or New

And We should consider the total message of the book we are reading . . .

And . . . how that book is organized to present its message.

These are just the basics to rightly interpreting the Word of God.

Contexts matter. And thus . . . faithful readers of the Bible must give themselves to surveying the Bible and its books to understand its message.

AND . . . for the next few weeks, we are going to do exactly that.

We are going to look at the Psalms as one unified book . . .

We will look at a few key Psalms . . . but even more . . . we will see how each of the 5 books found in the Psalms fits into one unified message.

Maybe you've noticed . . . as you have read the Psalms the note above **Psalms 1, Psalm 41, Psalm 73, Psalm 90, and Psalm 107**. . . in Scripture. . . there are 5 books in the Psalms

There's a reason for that . . . and this summer we are going to attempt to see what it is.

We are going to survey the land . . . and see the riches it contains.

Now Maybe this sounds strange . . .

Maybe you've never heard of reading the Psalms as five books

Or Maybe you've always read Psalms by themselves, returning to your favorites.

My aim this summer is not to dissuade you from reading the Psalms individually + devotionally

We must do that . . . we need the Psalms for our prayers and our pleas.

But as we pray them individually . . . we are helped by seeing how they fit together.

And how actually . . . those Psalms written by Israelites for Israelites under the Sinai covenant can be applied to non-Israelites trusting in Christ and his New Covenant.

In other words . . . instead of discounting the personal, prayerful ways you read the Psalms – and should read the Psalms.

My hope and prayer is that you would see

How the whole book offers blessing to those who read it and obey it.

How the whole book points to David as king . . . and then to his Son . . . a greater king who will come and sit on his eternal throne.

How the whole book promises a way of salvation to those who have failed to obey God's law . . . and are in need of mercy.

So . . .

If the Psalms are your jam . . . and you read them every day, I think there is much for you to learn.

And

If you are new to Christianity . . . or you are just because a friend invited you . . . and you have never even heard of King David . . .

There is also much for you here

The story of King David in the Pss . . . is the story of salvation for everyone.

For all of you . . . I pray that as you hear about the Psalms . . .

You will be interested to read them . . . and learn who God is . . . what God does . . . and how he offers salvation through his Son . . . the royal Son of David

So that's where we are going . . . And this morning we start with the two Psalms given to help us understand the message of the Psalter.

Arrangement in the Psalms

So . . . The first thing we need to see is that . . .

the arrangement of the Psalms is not accidental, but intentional. REPEAT

This means that the arrangement of the Psalter is not something we create today.

Rather . . . we FIND the arrangement as we carefully survey the Psalms.

What we find in the Psalms . . . is that

The Psalms are NOT a storage closet for old music books from Solomon's temple, they are instead a well-crafted collection of Hebrew songs . . . arranged with visible order.

And to see that – here are 5 evidences for arrangement . . .

. . . We could list a lot more than five evidences, but for now five will do.

1. From the time the Psalter was translated into Greek (LXX) . . . it had **five books**. In fact, Jewish tradition has always believed that “just as Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five books of Psalms to Israel.”

From the collections within the Psalter, it makes sense that there were earlier collections of Psalms, and some individual Psalms going back to Moses (see Ps 90).

But the final 150 Psalms we have, have always had five books.

That's the first evidence of arrangement, the second is the five

2. **Doxologies that end each book.** These verses are called ‘seam verses.’ They may be original to the psalms; or they may have been added by an editor. But clearly they are meant to mark the end of one book and the start of another.

Let's look at them.

Psalm 41:13 – Psalm 41 describes the activities of a righteous king, but one who knows his sin, and one who has faced the bitterness of deceit. Yet, it **closes with this PRAISE**

That's how the first book ends . . . and Book II does the same.

Psalm 72:18–19 – This is another royal song. This is one of two songs about Solomon. And it shows how the throne of David is passed down to his sons . . . and it **CONCLUDES**

Notice that v. 19 is not the last verse in the Psalm, however. Why? Because – **and this is the THIRD evidence for arrangement** – an editor has included . . . “the prayers of David

This verse will play an important role in our understanding for how Books I–II relate to the rest of the Books. **Still, Book II ends with a doxology, as does . . . Book III**

Psalm 89:52 – This Psalm celebrates God's covenant with David, but then laments the way in which sin brought that covenant to an end. Like Books I–II, Book III ends with a royal psalm . . . and this doxology . . .

Next . . . Book IV also finishes with a doxology.

Psalm 106:48 – Verse 47 petitions God to save his people. A prayer that is immediately answered in Psalm 107.

But Psalm 107 begins a new book. And Psalm 106 concludes with this PRAISE . . .

Finally, **Psalm 145:21** gives us one last doxology.

Technically speaking, Psalm 145 is not the last Psalm in Book V. But it is the last Psalm of David in the Psalter.

From Psalm 138–45 . . . we have a final collection of Davidic Psalms. Then beginning in Psalm 146, we find five Psalms that begin with Hallelujah = Praise the Lord!

Though there is debate as to where the conclusion of the Psalter is – is it just Psalm 150? Or is it Psalms 146–50?

I am inclined to see the doxology of **Psalm 145:21** as the end of work of God in redemptive history . . . something we will see unfold in the Psalms. **It READS . . .**

After this, the Psalter concludes with overwhelming praise – one Psalm for every book.

In other words, just as the five books have five doxologies, so the Psalter concludes with five praise Psalms at its end.

This is the FOURTH evidence of arrangement.

In addition to the division of five books,

and words of praise ending each book,

and the grouping of David's prayers ending in Psalm 72 . . .

there is an intentional symphony of praise ending the Psalter.

In other words, the Psalter has a very distinctive conclusion . . . that celebrates the kingdom of God, brought about through David's Son who kept the Torah.

And if there is a conclusion that praises God for this obedient king bringing redemption to the world. . . then we should expect the opening of the Psalter is equally arranged.

And what do we find when we read Psalm 1–2?

We find the Psalms begin with a pair of Psalms that tell us what all 150 are about . . .

In three words, Psalms 1 and 2 speak to us about

God's wisdom . . .

God's kingdom . . .

God's salvation

What the Psalter is About

That's what the Psalms are about . . .

1. **Walking in Wisdom** . . . and wisdom found in the Instruction from God
2. **Watching God** establish his king on David's throne . . . by defeating David's enemies
3. **Worshiping this king** . . . through prayer and petition, lament and praise, confession and jubilation, thanksgiving and obedience . . . all because of the salvation he brings.

This is what the Psalms are about . . . and we can see it as we read Psalm 1 and 2 together.

So let's first look at these 2 Psalms . . . and how they serve as a window to the rest.

Then . . . we will use them as our guide to read the Psalms as one unified book.

Three Observations That Show the Unity of Psalm 1 and 2 . . . THEN

Three Elements From Psalm 1 and 2 That Show What the Rest of the Psalter are About.

The first thing to observe is that Pss 1–2 are the only Psalms in Book I without a superscription.

A **superscription** is the part of the Psalm which lists the author, or the setting, or the musical terms. **116 of 150 Psalms have a Superscription.**

Some are as simple as Psalm 15: "A Psalm of David" or Psalm 37, "Of David"

Others are as specific as Psalm 3: "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son" or Psalm 4: "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David"

But here, in Psalms 1 and 2 there is no superscription. And that's significant because . . .

In Book I, every Psalm has superscription with David's name on it, except for 4 Psalms—Psalms 1 and 2, Psalm 10, and Psalm 33.

Most commentators believe that Psalm 10 should be read in union with Psalm 9, and Psalm 33 should be read with Psalm 32.

IOW, the reason for the absence of David's name in those two Psalms is explained by the tight arrangement with the previous Psalms.

The case is different with Psalm 1 and 2. Even though Psalm 2 is said to be David's Ps (see Acts 4) . . . the superscriptions are lacking,

Why? Because they function as a unified intro to the Psalms and not part of David's story.

That's the first thing to see.

The SECOND observation that shows how these two Psalms are united . . . is the way they begin and end with the same word – “Bless-ed”

This is more than a coincidence. Throughout the Psalms and throughout the Bible, biblical authors bookend their messages with literary devices like this.

They do so to highlight a certain word or idea.

In this case . . . **blessing** . . . defined by God’s covenant with Israel . . . is the framework of this introduction, and as we will see, it will become a key focus of the Psalms.

So notice. . .

Psalm 1:1–2 says . . . **Blessed** in the man who walks not . . .
Then . . . Psalm 2:12 concludes . . . **Blessed** are those who take refuge in him.

Who is the ‘him’ ?? – look at v. 12 . . . the Son

The Son, who v. 7 says, is situated on God’s Holy Hill.

In other words . . . it is the Son who is the Psalm 1 man.

Look at Psalm 15 . . . READ

Who is the one who shall dwell on God’s holy hill?

It is the one who lives a life directed by the Word of God.

In short, it is the Son of God . . . who is the Psalm 1 man.

Now before running to Jesus, as the Son described here . . .

Remember that David and David’s son are called the Son of God, too.

2 Sam 7:14 says of David’s son: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”

So Ps 2, when it was first written, makes sense in the historical context of king David.

David and his Son, by right of the Davidic covenant, were called sons of God.

But once Psalm 2 is made one of two introductory Psalms, this Psalm prepares the way for a greater Son to come. . . . **only it will take the entire Psalms to come to him.**

For now, we need to recognize that Psalm 1 and 2 . . . are not two Psalms who happen to live next door to each other . . . they are set next to each other to show the way of blessing

Psalm 1 – It comes through obedience to the Torah = the instruction of God

Psalm 2 – And for those who’ve failed to keep the Law . . . it comes thru faith in the Son

This brings us to the **THIRD** observation about Psalms 1 and 2.

It is this . . . there is in these two Psalms a particular logic . . . let's call it a gospel logic. . .

. . . that comes into focus as we read Psalm 1 and 2 as an introduction.

Together these two Psalms give us a window to see the whole Psalter.

And it comes from seeing the relationship of three elements in them.

We need to see three elements in Psalm 1–2 which guide us into the next 148 Pss.

The first element is the CENTRALITY of the Torah.

I saw Torah, rather than Law, because that's word used in **v. 2**. The ESV and most Bibles translate it Law. But really, LAW is unhelpful. Torah is a word for instruction, not just rules

Yes, God gave Israel the LAWS . . . but because he gave these laws to them AFTER he rescued them from slavery in Egypt . . . we should see the Law of Moses as a gracious gift of Instruction.

And here . . . Psalm 1 exemplifies the model Israelite . . . who delights to meditate on this instruction day and night.

Verse 1–3 says . . . **READ**

Thus, in these three verses, we are introduced to the Psalter as a kind wisdom literature . . . it is instruction for the wise man to cherish.

This is immediately contrasted with the wicked man, the foolish man who refuses to delight in the Torah of God.

Now, in fact, Psalm 1 does not say anything about what the wicked man is or does

Rather, it simply speaks about his demise . . . **READ vv. 4–6**

By context . . . we can discern . . . the wicked refuses to delight in the law of God and actually (as v. 1 has it) leads people away from God's instruction.

So . . . Psalm 1 sets up a vital contrast between the wise man who delights in God's Word

. . . and the foolish man who wickedly does not.

This division will be followed throughout the Psalms . . . and it shows what kind of book this is . . . **It's not so much a hymnbook . . . but a book of wisdom!**

Following Psalm 1 . . . the Psalms teaches us how to walk in obedience to God . . . which includes **turning** from wickedness and **seeking** first the Son of God.

Which brings us to the Son in Psalm 2 – the **SECOND** element we need to see in this window.

In **Psalm 2**, we find the wicked nations of Psalm 1 raging against the Lord.

At present, they are not condemned. They are alive and well and fighting vs. God.

Verses 1–3 describe their attitude and actions . . . **READ**

Interestingly, the same word for “meditate” in Psalm 1:2 is used in Psalm 2:1.

→ The nations rage and the peoples **plot** (= meditate) in vain.

→ They mediate on how to fight against God . . . and the law of God.

And v. 1 says this is an exercise in futility. But one that we see all around.

We live in a world which refuses to submit to God’s instruction . . . this is true of nations, national leaders, and individuals . . .

Indeed, apart from God’s saving grace . . . it is the true for all of us!

And . . . what does God do in response?

He laughs . . .

God is not threatened by the mightiest kings on the earth . . . nor are his plans changed.

Verses 4–6 exult in the sovereignty of God . . . and establishment of his Son’s throne.

LISTEN to what they say . . . vv. 4–6.

In response to the nations rage, we find God’s promise to set his son on the throne . . .

This, I contend, is the purpose of the Psalter . . . to show us how God is going to establish his kingdom on earth under the feet of his Son.

AND . . . to invite us to worship him in through allegiance to his Son . . .

So . . . as the Psalms unfold . . .

We see . . . in their five books. . . how God’s plan moves from David in history (in Books I–II) . . . to the loss of David’s kingdom (in Book III) to the establishment of God’s kingdom in (Book IV) . . . which is put under his Son’s feet (in Book V).

IOW . . . the Psalter is **soundtrack of salvation . . .** preparing the way for X’s Kingdom.

Psalm 2:6 is the goal of the Psalter and vv 7–9 explain how that kingdom will come into existence.

Look at verses 7–9 . . . **READ**

These three verses . . . explain how God will bring the nations under the feet of his Son.

Amazingly . . . instead of obliterating the nations who rage against him.

Jesus will intercede for them . . . he will die for them . . . and God will give a countless multitude to Jesus . . . from the nations . . . **as a reward for his obedience to the Father**

Indeed, in the NT . . . **Psalm 2:7** is an important text for Jesus' resurrection.

It is quoted in **Romans 1:4** and **Hebrews 5:5** . . . and in both instances it applies to his resurrection.

In Jesus' resurrection, he receives the people for whom he died.

A people who do not continue to rage against him (as in vv. 1–3), but a people who hear the invitation of verses 10–12 . . . and come to him.

Look at those verses . . .

In verses 10–12, the kings of the earth are called to wisdom . . . by clinging to the KING.

As **verses 1–3** indicates, these kings have rejected wisdom. . . they have not obeyed God's word. Thus they and all who follow them are under threat of judgment.

BUT . . . and this is a BIG BUT . . . that's not all there is to say . . .

As Psalm 2:12 reveals . . . **there is another way of blessing.**

This blessing doesn't come thru **works of the law** or **improved living** or **better loving.**

It comes through trust in God . . . and turning away from trusting in self.

Blessing comes by confessing your sin and your refusal to listen to God
. . . and by finding a new way of life in humble submission to King Jesus.

Children ...	ASK Q . . .	Do you refuse to listen to the instruction of God's Word? Do you fight the wisdom God gives you thru your parents? Do you wonder why you keep getting in trouble? Is it because you don't like listening to others? Maybe in your trouble . . . God is trying to get you to listen.
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Grown-ups ...	How many times have made foolish choices by ignoring God? How many problems and penalties could be avoided by listening? How many times has pride led you to do your own thing / own way? Where has it gotten you . . . Friend, are you willing to listen?
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Listen to what vv. 10–12 says . . . because in these words . . . you will find a way of blessing for those who have failed to obey God's instruction . . . **READ**

What a gracious God . . .

To those who deserve judgment . . . he offers a way of salvation!

To any . . . who have failed to walk in wisdom and rejected God's instruction

To those . . . who have raged against God's law or his grace

He invites you to come and take refuge in his Son . . .

To those who have failed to keep his law . . . God offers you his Son as the person and the place to find grace, forgiveness, help, and salvation.

Do you marvel at that? This is wonderful! This is why we sing.

And . . . this is what the Psalms are about!

They are a word of instruction to know God, to know his ways, and to walk in his wisdom . . . and they are a word that leads us to humbly bow & worship the king for his salvation.

As we see this in Psalm 1 . . . we will see throughout the Psalms, there is a constant divide between wisdom and folly, righteousness and unrighteousness, life and death.

As Paul puts it . . . God's word is given to teach us, reprove us, correct us, and train us.

Therefore, take up the Psalms . . . and learn from God the wisdom that leads to blessing.

Second, the Psalms are about establishing the kingdom of God.

As we will see . . . Books I–II follow the history of David's kingdom—it's rise, its fall, and the all emotions that go with the son of Jesse's life.

Book 3 recounts the demise of David's kingdom and the exile of Israel.

Then Book 4 recovers the kingdom of God . . . as the Psalm 93, 96, 97, 99 repeat . . . **The Lord Reigns! . . The Lord Reigns! . . The Lord Reigns!**

Despite the sins of David's son . . . God will establish his throne on earth. And Book IV shows how it will come through a New Exodus, led by God himself.

Finally, in response to his people's cry for redemption, God promises to establish his Son's throne through a royal priest promised in Psalm 110 and a sacrifice that restores access to the temple of god in Psalm 118.

This is the theme of Book V . . . which concludes with a symphony of praise for the salvation that he will bring to the earth.

Salvation . . . which is the third element that we will see in the Psalms.

In short . . .

The Pss gives us wisdom to walk in God's ways

They give us a king to watch and worship

They give us words to praise God for the salvation he offers.

Wisdom.

Kingdom.

Salvation.

These are the three elements we will see repeating in the Psalter.

And not surprisingly . . . they are the three elements we find present in Psalms 1 and 2.

Psalm 1 and 2 give introduce to what the Psalms are about and invite us who to kiss the Son . . . and learn wisdom from his gracious words.

Brothers and sisters. . .

This is the message of the Psalms.

And it is the message of the Bible.

And it is the theme of our communion today.

In his wisdom . . .

God sent his Son to die in the place of sinners . . .

So that sinners could be made heirs of his kingdom

. . . and participants in his holy communion.

Therefore, we take the Lord's Supper today . . .

renouncing our wisdom . . . and trusting in his

refusing our own lordship . . . and embracing his

rejecting all others salvations . . . looking only to his.