PSALMS TO STRANGE TUNES
Psalms 22, 45, 58, 60, 69, 75, 80, 88

by

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SONGS TO STRANGE TUNES

A feature of the Psalms, often ignored, are the various superscriptions that preface many of them. These superscriptions are of several types, some indicating the occasion for which the Psalm was composed,[1] others specifying their use in public worship,[2] and still others commemorating events in the life of David.[3] Some superscriptions concern musical performance. The term לַמְנַצֵּחַ (= to the director)[4] appears as a superscription for some fifty-five Psalms and probably refers to choral performance (cf. 1 Chr. 25). The terms מִזְמוֹר (= melody)[5] and שִׁיר (= song), which are applied to some fifty-seven psalms and fourteen psalms respectively, possibly differentiates between those sung with stringed instruments and those without.[6] The meaning of some designations is quite uncertain (i.e., *miktam* and *maskil*).

Among these various superscriptions, a number of Psalms are designated to be performed "according to _____".

According to "The Death of the Son" (Psalm 9)
According to "The Doe of the Morning" (Psalm 22)
According to "Lilies" (Psalms 45 and 69)
According to "The Dove on Distant Oaks" (Psalm 56)

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[1] Psalm 30, for instance, was composed for the dedication of the temple, Psalm 45 for a wedding (probably a royal wedding), Psalm 92 for the Sabbath. Several Psalms are called "Ascents" (Psalms 120-134), and the Jewish Mishnah records that these 15 psalms correspond to the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites. The Levites supposedly sang these psalms while ascending the temple steps. Possibly the "Ascents" also were used by pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem for festivals (cf. Is. 30:29). According to the LXX, Psalm 24 was for Sunday, Psalm 48 for Monday, Psalm 94 for Wednesday, Psalm 93 for Friday, and so forth. Designations for particular days probably meant that the appropriate Psalms were sung at the *tamid*, the daily morning burnt offering, cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms [OTL]* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 21.

[2] The so-called "Hallelujah Psalms" (105, 106, 111-113, 115, 117, 135, 146-150) either begin or conclude (or both) with "Hallelujah", which in turn suggests that they were used for liturgical worship in the temple in which the congregation gave the "Hallelujah" response.

[3] Psalms 18, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59 and 142 all are connected with episodes in David's outlaw period.

[4] In other contexts, this word seems to refer to foremen or overseers, cf. 2 Chr. 2:1, 17. In the Psalms, most translators assume that it refers to a musical director.

[5] *BDB*, p. 274.

[6] Weiser, p. 22.

According to "Do Not Destroy" (Psalms 57, 58, 59 and 75)
According to "The Lily of the Covenant" (Psalm 60 and 80)
According to "The Suffering of Affliction" (Psalm 88)

It often is assumed that such designations indicate popular tunes of the day.[7] If so, then the use of melodies in ancient Israel, somewhat like the melodies in early Protestantism, was to employ standard tunes but to alternate the lyrics. This would explain why in some cases more than a single psalm is designated for a given accompaniment. Even if this assumption is correct, however, we have no way of knowing exactly what the tunes were like aside from some very general principles.[8] They remain unknown melodies—strange tunes—from an ancient land. While we cannot recover the ancient tunes themselves mentioned in these psalms, we can explore the praises and laments that form their content. Psalms are composed prayers, and unlike other parts of the Bible, which emphasize God's word to us, the psalms are our words to God—our joys, sorrows, successes, failures, fears, hopes and regrets. These psalms express all these things. They contribute significantly to our spiritual life as we allow the ancient words to speak for us.

Psalm 58
A Prayer Against Tyrants

For the Director.
According to "Do Not Destroy".
To David.[9]
A miktam.

Since the debacle of 911, Americans have faced the threat of terrorism within their own borders in a way unimaginable for most of their history. To date, Americans have never fought a war in their own land with an outside enemy. They have never been occupied. Unlike for their many brothers and

[7] Some English versions render such designations as "to the tune of" (so NIV, CEV), while other versions ignore them altogether (NEB).
[8] The attempt has been made to connect the system of accents in the Hebrew Bible with ancient music, but this notation, whatever its value, is not earlier than the 6th century AD, cf. J. Eaton, *The Psalms Come Alive: Capturing the Voice & Art of Israel's Songs* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1984), p. 88. Still, it may be that some elements of ancient Hebrew music have carried over into the plainsong and chant of the ancient Christian church, cf. E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.464-466.
[9] The attempt by Delitzsch to connect Psalm 58 with the Absalom rebellion seems highly unlikely, cf. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) II.184. David's visceral pain over the waywardness of his son seems totally incompatible with the sentiments in this psalm.

sisters in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, tyrants largely have been other people's problems. Still, all people, even outside the context of war, know something of the oppression of unjust politics.

Psalm 58 begins with an apostrophe, an address to those worldly leaders whose responsibility it is to ensure justice. An apostrophe most frequently is akin to "thinking out loud". The one addressed in the apostrophe need not be physically present. Here, the question of justice is posed and quickly answered—rulers regularly abuse their positions of power.

How, then, does one pray about unjust rulers?[10] How does one respond to those who abuse power, taking advantage of those beneath them? This is the issue behind the opening verses (58:1-2). The parallelism between "hearts [that] devise injustice" and "hands [that] mete out violence" suggests a calculated ruthlessness—thought out in advance and carried through without compunction.[11]

From the opening apostrophe, the psalmist turns descriptive. What drives such folk? Tyranny begins early, and tyrants learn their bullying tactics and deceitful schemes from childhood (58:3). Using the simile of an Egyptian cobra, who strikes without warning and is immune to the charmer's flute, these abusers of power spew deadly poison without regard (58:4-5).[12]

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[10] Considerable discussion has attended the interpretation of the trilateral root אלם in 58:1. As it stands in the Masoretic Text, it is pointed as אֶלֶם (= silence?), and this meaning is occasionally followed (RV, ASV, NKJV), though it makes for a puzzling reading. A better pointing, however, is אֵלֶם (= rams), since this is a common ancient metaphor for human leaders or rulers, cf. M. Dahood, *Psalms 51-100 [AB]* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 57 (so NIV, NEB, CEV, AB). Not a few scholars wish to emend the consonantal text, making it אלים (= gods) and connecting it with Psalm 82:1 so as to describe a heavenly council of spirit-beings in attendance to Yahweh (so RSV, ESV, NASB, JB), cf. H. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, trans. H. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 535 and A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72 [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 430. That such a heavenly council is described in the Bible is not to be doubted (e.g., Dt. 33:2; 1 Kg. 22:19; Ps. 82:1; 89:5-7; 148:1-2; Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2; 15:8; Je. 23:18, 22), but even if this emendation is accepted, it still may only be a metaphorical reference to the human rulers who are controlled by the guardian spirits of the nations. Hence, the NAB offers the dynamic equivalency, "Do you indeed like gods pronounce justice and judge fairly, you men of rank?" All things considered, it seems unnecessary to emend the consonantal text. As Dahood has cogently put it, the usage of "'*elim* as 'gods,' for rulers, [is] not documented [in the ancient world], whereas '*elim*, 'rams=leaders,' is well attested," p. 57. Further, 58:3 speaks of these figures as "born", which surely implies humans, not spirit-beings. The LXX reads **οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων** (= sons of men), which clearly prefers a human, not spirit-being, interpretation.

[11] D. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72 [TOTC]* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), p. 208.

[12] Today, of course, we know that snakes are deaf and charmers hold their attention by the rhythmic movements of the flute, not its sound. Nonetheless, the ancient person would not have been privy to such knowledge. Snake charming was known throughout much of the ancient world, including Palestine (cf. Eccl. 10:11; Is. 3:3; Je. 8:17; Sirach 12:13).

Then follow imprecatory curses, prayers for the destruction of such abusers (58:6-9). The curses are couched in vivid and compelling metaphors, calling upon God to deliver a crushing retribution upon the perpetrators.

Lions with broken fangs (58:6)
Spilled water evaporating in the hot sun (58:7a)
Arrows with blunted points (58:7b)[13]
Snails melting in the hot desert sun (58:8a)
A stillborn child who dies before it lives (58:8b)
Crackling thorns beneath a traveler's cooking pot (58:9)

Such curses toward the ruthless, it may be observed, are not entirely the property of Old Testament figures, but also appear among Christians in the New Testament, too (1 Co. 16:22; Jude 11a). Some, if not many, have been offended by these strident cries for retributive justice, considering them as inferior expressions to be banished from Christian thought. Indeed, St. Paul bluntly urges, "Bless and do not curse" (Ro. 12:14; cf. Lk. 6:28; 1 Co. 4:12; Ja. 3:9-12). The question remains, then, whether or not there is any space for such prayers within the Christian community.

At the very least we should recognize that the ancient person of prayer was not delivering such curses lightly. He (they) prayed for God's vindication, something that even Jesus acknowledged in the context of unjust politics and the persistent prayers of the righteous for justice (Lk. 18:1-8). Such prayers were passionate pleas for true justice, not cloaks to cover up vindictiveness. Vengeance, after all, belongs to God, not to us (Je. 46:10; Na. 1:2-3; Ro. 12:19; 2 Th. 1:8-9; He. 10:30-31). The tone of such Old Testament prayers often seems cruel, but in an era when the rule of law—even God's law—was "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (e.g., Ex. 21:23-25; Lv. 24:17-22; Dt. 19:19-21), retributive justice was the order of the day, perhaps the only kind known. To be sure, Christ calls for a higher ethic that foregoes personal vengeance (Mt. 5:38-42), but in doing so, he does not cancel out God's judgment (Mt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:7-9; 23:33-36; 24:50-51). If anything, he increases its gravity! Derek Kidner has well said that "invective has its own rhetoric, in which horror may be piled on horror more to express the speaker's sense of outrage than to spell out the penalties he literally intends."[14] Imprecatory language, shocking as it is, arouses us to a passionate rebuttal of injustice—and it calls upon us to pray for God's final justice!

[13] The Hebrew is quite difficult here, and some versions take it to mean grass that is trodden under foot (so RSV, NEB) as opposed to blunted arrows (so NIV, NASB, KJV, ASV, ESV, AB, CEV).
[14] Kidner, p. 27.

The conclusion of the prayer ends with the joy of vindication. It is God who acts, God who rewards the righteous, and God who judges the earth (58:10-11). Life is not meaningless, and evil is not senseless. Justice is coming, and God's people must wait for it. As the Elder John put it, "This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints" (13:10; 14:12). The gory image of the righteous bathing their feet in the blood of the wicked, like other strident calls for vengeance (e.g., Ps. 137:8-9), are shocking to our sensibilities. Even as hyperbole (which this phrase surely is), the expression is brutal and extreme. However, such language is more emotive than descriptive, and in fact, as is stated in Isaiah, God treads the winepress "alone" (Is. 63:3). Hyperbole of harsh language was common in the ancient world, especially in the form of curses against those who violated covenants. Such extreme metaphors move God's people to love what God loves and hate what he hates. If divine love and justice is overwhelming, divine judgment is equally severe.[15] In the end, not only are the righteous sufferers vindicated, God himself is acknowledged as the judge of all the earth!

Psalm 60
A Prayer in the Midst of Defeat

For the Director.
According to "The Lily of the Covenant"
Miktam.
To David.
To Teach.
When he fought Aram Naharaim (= Aram of the Two Rivers) and Aram Zobah (north of Damascus), and when Joab returned and struck down 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

That Psalm 60 is prefaced by the heading "to teach" should alert the reader to the fact that this prayer is not to be passed over lightly. Out of a particular historical circumstance comes a lesson for future generations. The lesson was significant enough that the last half of Psalm 60 appears twice: Psalm 60:6-12 parallels Psalm 108:7-13. In summary, the lesson is this: hard times prompt God's people to depend even more heavily on him and his divine promises, for as the Psalm concludes, "The help of man is worthless" (60:11b).

[15] For a compelling discussion of the use of extreme metaphor in the Old Testament, see D. Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

Every person knows the feeling of helplessness that comes from circumstances beyond one's control. So it was with David. In this case, the Israelite army had traveled far to the north, where they engaged the Arameans of northwest Mesopotamia and central Syria.[16] The conflict is listed among the various wars of David after he united the Israelite tribes (2 Sa. 8:5; 10:6-19; 1 Chr. 19:6-19). In consolidating his borders, the biblical testimony was that "Yahweh gave David victory everywhere he went" (2 Sa. 8:6b). The spoils of war David dedicated to God (2 Sa. 8:11), for he knew that victory was to be credited to Yahweh's presence, not human ingenuity.

While the Israelite army was in the far north near the Euphrates River (cf. 2 Sa. 8:3), the Edomites, Israel's perennial enemy from south of the Dead Sea, apparently took advantage of the circumstance and invaded Judah. This invasion is not described in the Samuel and Chronicles narratives, but it is presupposed as the background for Psalm 60. Victory in the north was tarnished by havoc at home. How discouraging it must have been to be so successful far away but unexpectedly defeated in one's own homeland. Moving swiftly southward, David and the army prepared to attack Edom. If Edomite tendencies held true for this invasion, the Edomites may have taken slaves as well as booty (cf. Am. 1:6, 9). The prayer in Psalm 60, then, is a plea for victory in the coming conflict with Edom. The superscription plus the brief accounts in Samuel and Kings give the main result, though the exact details are obscure. Apparently, both Abishai (1 Chr. 18:12-13) and Joab (1 Kg. 11:15-16) figured significantly in the battle, which was joined in the Valley of Salt.[17] In the end, the victory of the Israelite army made David famous (2 Sa. 8:13a). David, however, was wise enough to realize that the victory must be credited to God, which is why this prayer, reflecting the situation before resolution, needed to be preserved as a lesson for future generations. It was a lesson in how to pray for God's victory in the midst of present defeat.

Clearly, the grief of the Israelites following the Edomite invasion was intense. They felt rejected by God (60:1), though not entirely forsaken, since

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[16] Aram is the ancient name for a large people group in the area of modern Syria, a people linguistically related to the Israelites (both spoke dialects of West Semitic Aramaic). In addition to the Bible, ancient Assyrian records beginning in the late 12th and early 11th century document their existence in several clan groups, each named after the dominant tribal founder using the form *bit-* (= house of) plus a personal name, cf. W. Pitard, "Arameans," *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. A. Hoerth, G. Mattingly and E. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 210-215.

[17] That the Valley of Salt is within Edomite territory seems evident in that two Israeli-Edomite conflicts occurred there, the one mentioned in this psalm and a later one during the kingship of Amaziah (2 Kg. 14:7; 2 Chr. 25:11). At present, the exact location is unknown, cf. *ABD* (1992) V.907. The cause for the discrepancy between the number slain, 12,000 in Psalm 60 and 18,000 in the Samuel and Chronicles records, is unknown, but could be due to a scribal transmission error.

they still considered themselves to be loved by God (60:5). Still, the shock of invasion had shaken and fractured the land (60:2). People were confused; times were desperate (60:3a). The metaphor of drunkenness (60:3b) is familiar from various other passages that describe defeat in war as a debilitating intoxication (cf. Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17, 22-23; Je. 25:15-29; Eze. 23:31-34). The only real hope in a fragmented world was God himself. In him, and only in him, was there an ensign around which the people of God could rally (60:4). The fact that the flow of thought is interrupted by *Selah* at this point implies emphasis.[18] It is followed by the urgent plea for God's help. The people still believed that God loved and cared for them, but they knew they needed his powerful right hand to save them (60:5)!

The answer to this prayer is often viewed as a second voice in the psalm beginning in 60:6. If the psalm was performed in temple worship at later times, as seems likely in view of the superscription that it was intended "to teach", then the second voice would be spoken by a priest in response to the initial prayer by the people. God had spoken from his sanctuary (60:6a)![19] His prediction of triumph already had been affirmed by his holy promises! The occasion of this oracle is not stated. Some have supposed it to have been at the Feast of Booths (cf. Dt. 31:10-13), but David just as well could have received this oracle outside a liturgical context. Whatever the case, the next lines announce the far-reaching sovereignty of Yahweh who was lord over the nations. Not only did he own the land Israel inherited from the Canaanites, including Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah (60:6b-7), he also owned the lands of Moab, Edom and Philistia (60:8).

Shechem and *Succoth* were cities in the central cisjordan and transjordan respectively. Since both were connected with the ancient Jacob narratives, they probably represent territories both east and west of the Jordan deeded by God to their ancestor (cf. Ge. 33:17-18). *Gilead* was the primary tribal inheritance east of the Jordan, *Manasseh* straddled the Jordan with clan holdings on both sides, and *Ephraim* and *Judah* were the primary clan holdings to the west of the Jordan. Altogether, the areas listed comprise the heart of the Israelite inheritance on both sides of the river. All these

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[18] The meaning of the term סלה (*selah*), which occurs some 71 times in the MT of the Psalms, 92 times in the LXX, and three times in Habakkuk, is unknown. In the LXX, the Greek translation gives the equivalent of διάψαλμα (*diapsalma*), which may refer to an interlude for instruments or singing or contemplation. Luther took the latter to be the appropriate meaning: "Selah, that little word, whenever it occurs in the Psalms, ordinarily is a sign that we are to think more deeply and at greater length what the words to which it is attached mean to say," cf. H. Kraus, pp. 27-29.

[19] Lit., "from his holy [ ]", which might be taken as "his holiness" rather than "his holy place" (cf. RSVmg, NEBmg).

territories Yahweh claimed as his own. That Ephraim was Yahweh's helmet (lit., "the protection of my head") is a metaphor depicting Ephraim's role as the warrior clan in the north. Judah, the clan of David, is Yahweh's tribe for royalty. The promise of Judah as God's scepter goes all the way back to Jacob's dying blessing (cf. Ge. 49:10).

In addition, Yahweh announced his claim on the immediately contiguous nations of *Moab* (to the east of the Jordan), *Edom* (to the south of the Dead Sea), and *Philistia* (the southwestern coastal plain). The metaphor of Moab as a washbasin infers menial status while also recalling Moab's holdings on the eastern edge of the Dead Sea, which is shaped like a washbasin and into which the central watershed flows without an outlet. The gesture of tossing a sandal on the territory of Edom was probably a symbol of ownership (cf. Ru. 4:7; Dt. 11:24). All these contiguous areas came under Israelite control during the wars of David (cf. 2 Sa. 8:1-2, 14; 1 Chr. 18:1-2, 13). If these victories owed their impetus to an oracle given in the Tent of Meeting, then David's wars were not merely self-designed invasions of his neighbors, but acts of obedience to God's commands.

Finally comes the intercession for victory over Edom (60:9). Who will lead? The question is rhetorical, but given the recent Edomite invasion, it is a question whose answer is not predetermined. If Yahweh had allowed the Edomite encroachment in the first place, would it be proper to expect him to give Israel victory now (60:10)? Still, the true leader must be Yahweh himself, the consummate Man of War (cf. Ex. 15:3). The capture of Edom's fortified city—possibly Bozrah or Petra—depended upon Yahweh's help, for human ingenuity would surely fall short.[20] The final line puts it succinctly: "we" will gain the victory with God's aid, but in the end, it will be "he" who will trample down the enemies. The message of this psalm is echoed from an earlier composition: *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the* LORD *our God* (Ps. 20:7).

Psalm 45
A Wedding Song

For the Director.
According to "Lilies".
To the sons of Korah.
Maskil.
Song of Weddings.

[20] Bozrah and Petra were Edom's most important cities. The name בצרה (*Botsrah*) means "fortified city", but Dahood translates עיר מצור as "Rock City", meaning Petra, cf. Dahood, p. 81.

Several psalms are directly linked to the sons of Korah (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88). The family of Korah was a levitical clan descending through the family line of Kohath and Izhar (Ex. 6:16, 18, 21; Nu. 26:58). Clearly, the family of Korah figured prominently as worship leaders for Israel (cf. 2 Chr. 20:19).[21] The superscription *maskil* is possibly a term describing the psalm as an "artistic song" expressing wisdom,[22] and the first verse of the psalm supports this idea (45:1). That the psalm is prefixed by the term "weddings" (plural) suggests that it may have been a standard text which, while having been composed for a particular wedding, came to be used more widely. Since the groom is "the king" (45:1), the occasion is a royal event.

While the psalm does not have a clearly demarcated structure, it does contain three primary elements: compliments given to both the groom and the bride, challenges to each, and promises for both.[23] These elements parallel to a considerable degree the form of weddings that come down to us through the centuries in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

It is necessary to have a general idea about weddings in the ancient world. There is considerable literature from antiquity describing weddings, both biblical and non-biblical, and while marriages usually were parentally arranged,[24] the language about marriage also demonstrates a passionate love between the married partners. Still, it is probably fair to say that the chronology was "marriage and love" rather than "love and marriage". Though the Bible does not suggest an ideal age for marriage, in general the age for marriage was much younger than in modern times.[25] The wedding itself consisted of a covenant between the groom and bride sometimes attested by a written document (cf. Pro. 2:17; Mal. 2:14; Tobit 7:14). The marriage was established in two stages, the betrothal and the home-taking. In

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[21] The prominence of the Korahites in Israelite worship raises the question of their survival after the incident in Nu. 16, when their ancestor led a rebellion against Moses. The divine judgment against this rebellion was the death of Korah and his followers along with "their wives, children and little ones" (Nu. 16:27) and "their households" (Nu. 16:31-32). Later, however, Numbers specifically states that "the line of Korah did not die out" (Nu. 26:11), and subsequent records show them serving in the temple as gatekeepers (1 Chr. 9:19; 26:1, 19) and bakers (1 Chr. 9:31).

[22] This meaning is deduced from the observation that the term מַשְׂכִּיל (*maskil*) may be related to the hiphil form הִשְׂכִּיל (*haskil* = to make keen, clever; to show insight), cf. Kraus, pp. 25-26.

[23] J. Goldingay, *Songs from a Strange Land* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), p. 82.

[24] Indeed, the active role of Samson in choosing his own wife implies a headstrong breaking of custom (Jg. 13:1-3), and Esau's choice was a grief to his parents (Ge. 26:34-35).

[25] In Egypt, girls were married between the ages of 12 and 14, young men between the ages of 14 and 20. In Greece, girls usually were married between 14 and 20 and young men between 20 and 30. In Rome, the legal minimum age was 12 for girls and 14 for boys. The Jewish Talmud recommends marriage for girls at puberty, that is, about 12 or 13 (*Yebamot* 62b) and boys between 14 and 18. A girl younger than 12 ½ could not refuse a marriage arranged by her father (*Qiddusin* 2b), but beyond 12 ½, she must give her assent, cf. *ABD* (1992) IV.562-563.

the initial stage, the arrangement and promise of marriage was made prior to the wedding itself.[26] If the circumstance of David's betrothal to Michal is formulaic, the prospective father-in-law announced, "Today you shall be my son-in-law" (1 Sa. 18:21). The מֹהַר (*mohar* = bride price) was paid at that time. Sometime later, the wedding took place in which the bride was transferred from the home of her father to the home of her husband. At this time, a formal vow may have been uttered, similar to modern wedding vows.[27] The processional between homes was accompanied by music (1 Maccabees 9:39), love songs (Jer. 16:9) and a cry of announcement (Mt. 25:6). Then followed a great feast, normally a week long (Ge. 29:27; Jg. 14:12), though in some cases it might extend as long as even two weeks (Tobit 8:20; 10:7).

The opening of the psalm extols the graces of the royal groom (45:2-9). Since the sons of David's line were to be considered the sons of God (2 Sa. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-29), the royal groom was the embodiment of all that the royal king should be—a person of articulate graciousness (45:2), the protector of the people (45:3), and the champion of truth, humility and righteousness (45:4). His wars were Gods wars; his triumphs were God's triumphs (45:5). These royal compliments, as Derek Kidner so aptly remarks, quickly "blossom into divine honours" (45:6a). Some translators have flinched at the bold acclamation of the king as "God",[28] but the Masoretic Text, buttressed by the ancient versions (LXX, etc.), clearly address the king as אלהים (*Elohim* = God), an address that only makes complete sense in the messianic perspective of the New Testament.[29] The king rules in justice (45:6b). His cause is righteousness, and his judgments are against wickedness (45:7a). His elevation to the throne is an act of divine anointing (45:7b; cf. 1 Sa. 10:1; 15:17; 2 Sa. 12:7; 2 Kg. 9:6), and while the king is addressed as "God", there also is a clear distinction between "God" and "your God". The implications of this passage for the doctrine of the Trinity have long been recognized (i.e., "God of very God", The Nicene Creed). In preparation for the wedding, the king is robed and perfumed (45:8a). His entrance from the palaces inlaid with ivory is heralded by music

[26] The law of Moses, for instance, distinguishes between an engaged person and a married person (cf. Dt. 20:7; 22:23-27).

[27] In the Elphantine Texts (Jewish texts from the Persian Period), the declaration was made by the groom: "She is my wife and I am her husband, from this day forever," cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 33.

[28] The RSV has "your divine throne" and the marginal note has "your throne is a throne of God". The NEB has "your throne is like God's throne".

[29] Other versions that give full weight to the text as it stands include KJV, ASV, NIV, NASB, NAB, ESV and NRSV.

(45:8b), while princesses from foreign lands follow in his retinue (45:9a). All is now ready! The royal bride will now take her place to stand at the king's right hand (45:9b).

The next section turns attention to the royal bride, who was introduced in the previous verse. A marriage is both a union and a separation—a joining to a spouse, but a distancing from family and parents (45:10; cf. Ge. 2:24). That she is to "forget" her family does not so much imply rejection as the establishment of a new loyalty to her husband. Now, he will be her first priority, for he is her "lord" (45:11b). If she came from a distant land, which was not uncommon for royalty, it may be implied that she, like Ruth, should become a true Israelite in faith as well as circumstance (cf. Ru. 1:16).[30] The king, for his part, equally desires her as his first concern (45:11a).[31] Though as the queen she is subordinate to the king as her "lord", as the queen she also will be showered with gifts, for his subjects are now hers as well (45:12).[32] Within her bridal chamber prior to the wedding procession, she is dressed in her finest clothes before being led to the king while accompanied by her bridesmaids (45:13-14). Together, the bride and her maids enter the palace, where the king awaits in anticipation for the union (45:15).

It is not apparent in the English text, but the final two verses turn back to address the king (the second person pronouns are masculine). He, too, must be oriented toward the future—toward the prospect of having sons of his own, who will succeed him (45:16). The memory of his righteous rule will never be forgotten (45:17)!

Several observations are in order about this psalm. In the first place, the precedents for even the modern wedding ceremony are striking. The ornate bridal clothing of the groom (45:3b, 8) and bride (45:13b-14a), the celebration of the occasion with music (45:8b, 15a), the bridal march when she is accompanied by her bridesmaids (45:14), the standing of the groom and bride side-by-side, with the bride at the groom's right hand (45:9b), even the giving of wedding gifts (45:12)—all these elements have been the stuff of weddings for centuries! While the bridal chamber (45:13a), probably in her parents home, has now been replaced by a bridal room in the church, the imagery is remains parallel.

More important for Christians, however, are the profound messianic overtones in this psalm. The link between David's posterity and the coming

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[30] Goldingay, p. 85.

[31] The verb אוה means to crave or desire. It sometimes is used for physical desire, such as food or water (Nu. 11:4), but it also carries a more spiritual nuance, as when Isaiah's Hymn of Praise depicts Judah saying to God, "My soul yearns for you in the night…" (Is. 26:9a).

[32] The "Daughter of Tyre" might refer to a foreign princess, but it also could be a metaphor for the people of Tyre (cf. Is. 47:1, 5).

messiah are amply attested throughout the prophets. In light of Jesus, who was proclaimed as David's Son and God's Son (cf. Mt. 1:1; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 3:23,38b; Ro. 1:2-4), much of the exalted language of the psalm takes on heightened meaning. The lips anointed with grace (45:2), the blessing of God forever (45:3), the defender of truth, humility and righteousness (45:4), sovereignty over the nations (45:5b), and the clear address, "Your throne, O God…" (45:6)—the One who reigns in justice and loves righteousness—must have struck the earliest Christians with terrific force. No wonder the writer in Hebrews quotes this very passage:

> *But about the Son he says,*
> *"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,*
> *and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.*
> *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;*
> *therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions*
> *by anointing you with the oil of joy."* (He. 1:8-9)

Not to be lost is the imagery of the groom and bride, for the church is Christ's bride (Ep. 5:32; 2 Co. 11:2; Rv. 19:9; 21:2).[33] The final note, that the king's "sons" would be made princes throughout the earth, surely must resonate with the description that Christ will "bring many sons to glory" (He. 2:10) and the promise that the saints will rule and reign with him (Rv. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). The memory of the great King will last for all generations, the nations praising him forever (45:17).

Psalm 69
Overwhelmed!

For the Director.
According to "Lilies".
To David.

Two things strike the reader about this psalm at the outset: first, it is a deeply moving description of a suffering individual who is overwhelmed with opposition and persecution. Hence, the psalm is intensely personal, filled with agonizing first person references. Second, the psalm ends on a corporate note about God's captive people, Zion and the cities of Judah, expressing confidence that they will be restored (69:33b-36). The relationship between these two features merits attention. In the first place, if

[33] In fact, some hymn writers drew directly from this psalm, such as, in the hymn *Come Thou Almighty King* with its phrase "gird on thy mighty sword" (45:3) or the hymn *Ride on! Ride on in majesty!* (45:4).

the psalm is primarily about the distress of a single individual, then the corporate ending must be either incidental or perhaps added later as a congregational response to a personal petition for God's help. Along these lines, some have suggested that the prayer is by a Jewish exile in Babylon, who primarily prays about his personal distress but, at the end, extrapolates out of his painful experience a comment about the dilemma of the whole nation, which had lost its land and temple mount.[34] On the other hand, if the concluding verses are taken as determinative for the whole psalm, then the individual who prays functions as a representative of the nation. His prayers are an expression of corporate personality using the metaphor of an individual.[35] If so, then while the distress could be as early as David,[36] the references to Judah and Zion sound like they belong in the period of the divided monarchy or later. Along these lines, some have suggested that the individual in the psalm is the Davidic king himself, who personifies the nation. He identifies his own fate with the fate of the people.[37] A comparable situation in which the cities of Judah were decimated actually occurred during the reign of Hezekiah, when 46 fortified cities were destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BC (2 Kg. 18:13).[38] Either way, both individual and corporate elements are clearly present, and even if the individual in the psalm is intended as a metaphor for the whole nation, such a metaphor would have meaning precisely because the painful suffering of individuals was so well known within the human family.

The prayer is both descriptive as well as prescriptive. The initial verses describe the extremity to which the sufferer has been reduced. The imagery of drowning (69:1-2) and the repeated calls for help suggest desperation and overwhelming circumstances (69:3). He is beset by personal enemies who attack without provocation (69:4a) and legal reprisals for imaginary crimes (69:4b). It is not that this man claims perfection before God (69:5). He is far from self-righteous. Rather, it is that the persecution leveled against him in no way corresponds with his true situation.

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[34] So, Dahood, p. 156. In this reading, of course, the heading "to David" must be understood in the broader sense of "in honor of David" or "in honor of David's dynasty".

[35] The fluidity between the one and the many, the individual and the corporate, was a distinct feature of ancient Near Eastern thought, cf. H. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[36] Paul actually cites the Psalm and credits it to David (cf. Ro. 11:9), though some would argue that this is merely conventional language.

[37] S. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 65-66, 117-118.

[38] The biblical record simply says "all" Judah's fortified cities were captured, but Sennacherib's Assyrian record set the number of fortified cities at 46 along with "countless small villages", cf. J. Pritchard, *ANET* (1969) p. 288.

Now the sufferer turns to the effect his dilemma has on others. If God does not hear his plea in the midst of distress, might not others abandon their faith (69:6)? What will God's people think if God allows an innocent sufferer to be destroyed with impunity? The ridicule and shame heaped upon him by even his own family members have been due to his devotion to God's house (69:7-9)! Because his enemies are defiant to God, they take out their defiance upon God's servant. If for his part he shows any expressions of repentance and grief, he is mocked (69:10-11). His enemies used his own confessions to God as evidence of his guilt and justification for their scorn. His plight is now bandied about in the patronizing song of drunkards (69:12)!

Here, then, is his desperate plea to God for deliverance. He appeals to God's gracious character in the midst of malicious enemies and overwhelming circumstances (69:13-18). The vocabulary he uses to describe God's compassion rings with hope!

חֶסֶד (69:13b, 16a) = loyal love, covenant love
רָצוֹן (69:13a) = favor
רָחַם (69:16b) = compassion, love
בֶּאֱמֶת יִשְׁעֶךָ (69:13c) = with [the] fidelity of your salvation
גאל (69:18a) = redeem
פָּדָה (69:18b) = ransom

Still, for the present his lot was paralyzing ridicule, dishonor and embarrassment (69:19-20a). Abandoned to destruction, his desperate plea for relief was answered by poison[39] and vinegar (69:20b-21).

Now follows a series of curses upon his enemies. As with Psalm 58:6-9, these curses flow from a vibrant hope for final justice. They spring from a covenantal society in which earned retribution follows disobedience and rebellion. Hence, the psalmist prays that his enemies' "table" become a snare (69:22), which might be a wish for food poisoning, but also possibly a reference to sacrificial meals in which the blessing of the deity turns to judgment. The darkening of the eyes (69:23a) may be a wish for blindness (cf. Dt. 28:28), while he wishes for their "loins", often a metaphor for strength and vigor, to tremble (69:23b).[40] The sufferer prays for divine wrath

[39] The word רֹאשׁ, traditionally translated "gall", refers to an unspecified poisonous plant (cf. Dt. 29:18) or snake venom (cf. Dt. 32:33).

[40] The term can refer either to the loins or the hips and small of the back. The term מעד (= to shake, wobble) probably denotes a loss of strength, for which the NIV, following the meaning of "back" rather than loins, substitutes the verb "bent".

(69:24), sterility and disinheritance (69:25), punishment and prosecution (69:27a) and, at last, damnation (69:27b-28) for his persecutors! His vivid curses flow from the painful fact that his enemies take pleasure in his distress. If God has allowed him to be wounded, it is not their business to add insult to injury (69:26)! So, he prays that they will be damned, disinherited of salvation (69:27b) and erased from the list of the righteous (69:28b). His curses are matched only by his personal agonies (69:29).

Now follows a vibrant thanksgiving set to music (69:30). Such heartfelt praise is more pleasing to God than the ritual of animal sacrifice (69:31; cf. 50:8-15; 51:16-17)! Then comes an answer to the implicit question in 69:6. When God redeems the sufferer, others will see and rejoice, especially the needy and those who seek God (69:32-33). So, let God be praised in heaven and earth, for he will indeed save his holy Mount Zion and rebuild the desolated cities of Judah so that his people can live there again (69:34-36)!

Psalm 69 is one of the most oft-quoted Psalms in the New Testament. When Jesus cleansed the temple, his disciples recalled the verse, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Jn . 2:17; cf. Ps. 69:9a). On the night of his arrest, Jesus himself referred to the Psalm with respect to his rejection by the temple authorities, "They hated me without cause" (Jn. 15:25b; cf. Ps. 69:4). In recalling the shameful treatment of Jesus' cross and the need for Christians to please others rather than themselves, Paul cited the passage, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me" (Ro. 15:3; cf. Ps. 69:9b). Peter cited one of the curses of the psalm in connection with Judas' betrayal, changing the plural to a singular to make it more applicable: "May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it" (Ac. 1:20; cf. Ps. 69:25). Paul cited the curses of 69:22-23 and applied them to the people of Israel in their habitual hardening against God (Ro. 11:9-10),[41] though he was quick to add that their stumbling was not beyond recovery (Ro. 11:11).

All these citations suggest that the early Christians interpreted Psalm 69 as messianic. The sufferings of the individual in Psalm 69 paralleled the sufferings of Christ, and not a few Christians have seen the references to "gall" and "vinegar" (69:21) as fulfilled in the cross (cf. Mt. 27:34, 48//Mk. 15:36//Lk. 23:36//Jn. 19:29). Even the reference to alienation from siblings has its New Testament counterpart in Jesus' rejection by his brothers (Jn. 7:1-5; Ps. 69:8). Of course, some parts of the psalm can hardly refer to Jesus, such as, the sufferer's confession of guilt (Ps. 69:5). Most strikingly different is that instead of imprecatory curses against his enemies (Ps. 69:22-

[41] Paul seems to be citing the LXX rather than the MT.

28), Jesus offered forgiveness (Lk. 23:34; 1 Pe. 2:23). In the end, the sufferer in Psalm 69 stands both in continuity and discontinuity with Christ. His experience of terrible and unjust suffering was fully plumbed in the Lord Jesus who was disgraced, scorned, shamed and insulted. Like Christ, this man looked for sympathy and comfort but found none (Ps. 69:19-20). But unlike this ancient man, Christ reversed the language of cursing, replacing the passion of retribution with the passion of a new covenant of forgiveness. As a reader of this psalm, the Christian must come to terms with both its continuity and discontinuity in Christ.[42]

Psalm 80
Catastrophe in the North

For the Director.
According to "The Lilies of the Covenant".
To Asaph.
Mizmor.

The question of historical setting looms large for this psalm. On the one hand, most of the specific tribal and geographical citations—Israel, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh—apply especially to the northern clans (80:1-2). The reference to the "vine" out of Egypt may specifically recall Jacob's blessing of Joseph (80:8; cf. Ge. 49:22). Only the tribe of Benjamin, which lay on the border of both the north and the south, had a southern provenance (80:2b). On the other hand, the references to Asaph (superscription) and the enthronement of Yahweh in the Jerusalem temple (80:1) offer a southern perspective.[43] The memory of the mini-empire under David remained vivid with its extension from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates River (80:11),[44] but certainly the succeeding verses imply the demise of this golden age (80:12-13). The reader should assume a post-931 BC date, when the united kingdom ruptured into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the reign of Rehoboam (cf. 1 Kg. 12).

Given these various references, interpreters have struggled to locate the historical setting for this psalm. Some suggest that it was composed

[42] The comments of John Bright about a similar imprecatory psalm are instructive, cf. J. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), pp. 234-241.
[43] According to Ezra 2:41, Asaph was the ancestor of temple singers, and the Chronicles record lists him as one of David's chief musicians (1 Chr. 6:39; 15:17; 16:5; 2 Chr. 5:12).
[44] The mini-empire of David was not particularly unique in the period to which it belongs. After the demise of the Egyptian and Hittite Empires but before the rise of Assyria, the nations of the Levant were afforded a window of political opportunity, and several such mini-empires arose, cf. K. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 98-102.

shortly after the split-up of Solomon's kingdom (931 BC), others that it was during the final days of the northern kingdom (between 732-722 BC), when the Assyrian juggernaut threatened to end its national life.[45] Still others offer the possibility that it was after the north already was in exile, while in the south there was a revived interest in restoring the whole of Israel during the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC, cf. 2 Kg. 23:15, 19-20; 2 Chr. 34:6-7, 33). None of these possibilities are certain, though all are possible. What is clear enough is that the northern clans had experienced catastrophe, and the shock waves were deeply felt even in the south. There is no hint of the old north-south rivalry—only a heartfelt concern over the disaster for brother-Israelites.

In form, the psalm is punctuated by collective intercession for restoration (80:3, 7, 14, 19). Probably, this means that a priest or choir would recite the main body of the prayer, but at intervals, the people would respond with collective pleas. In these refrains, the form of the divine name escalates:

אלהים = God (80:3)
אלהים צבאות = God of Hosts (80:7)
אלהים צבאות = God of Hosts (80:14)
יהוה אלהים צבאות = Yahweh, God of Hosts (80:19)

The expression "make your face shine upon us" derives from the fact that the metaphor of God's face is a manifestation of his whole personality.[46] The ancient priestly blessing, "…Yahweh make his face shine upon you" (Nu. 76:24-26), is a plea for God's favor. For God to turn his face toward someone signifies his intent to do good. For him to turn his face away signifies rejection (Ge. 3:8; 4:14, 16; Lv. 22:3).[47]

The psalm commences with the metaphor of God as the divine Shepherd of Israel (80:1a; cf. Ps. 23:1), a metaphor that stretches back into antiquity with respect to the Joseph clans (Ge. 48:15; 49:24). He is also the holy King who sits on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant in

[45] Many scholars favor this interpretation, since it seems to be buttressed by the LXX, which prefaces the psalm with the superscription "a Psalm concerning the Assyrian".
[46] E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. A. Heathcote and P. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 77-79.
[47] Though it is not always clear in English translation, passages such as these all use the term "face" with respect to being alienated from God's presence.

Solomon's temple(80:1b).[48] The plea is for God to "shine forth", "awaken", "save" and "turn/restore" the northern tribes (80:1-3).[49] Though all the tribes mentioned descend from Rachel (Ge. 30:22-24; 35:16-18; 41:51), it may be that they represent the northern tribes as a whole.

The catastrophe in the north was confessed to be due to God's wrath (80:4), and indeed, from the people's unfaithfulness (80:18a). God had judged them in history, no longer listening to their prayers for help, but reducing them to grief, controversy with neighboring nations and mockery from their enemies (80:5-6). Once again, they pray, "Turn us, Yahweh Tsabaoth" (80:7)! The expression "bread of tears" occurs only here in the Bible, but the metaphor graphically describes the low estate (cf. Ps. 42:3). The Joseph vine brought out of Egypt and planted in Canaan, once a mighty cedar (cf. Eze. 17:1-10), had now been stripped of its protection so that it was vulnerable to every raider who passed (80:8-13). Looming large behind this disaster is the fundamental question, "Why?"

As in many of the prophets, the verb שׁוב (= turn) does double and triple duty. First, the plea is "turn us" (80:3, 7). This speaks of repentance on the part of the people. Only when they have deeply repented (turned) will God then show them his favor (he will turn to them), or as Zechariah later will put it, "Return to me…and I will return to you" (Zec. 1:3). Thus, the congregational refrain in 80:14 is "[re]turn to us, now"! The vine of Joseph is still God's vine, even in its waywardness, and its king is still God's earthly representative, his "son" (80:15). Though cut and burned, the vine could rise from the ashes by the son God raises up (80:16-17).[50] This is their hope! Then, they would no longer fall away[51] from the Lord, but he would revive them so they would call on him sincerely (80:18). The psalm

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[48] The association of cherubim with a royal throne is very ancient. One finds a cherubim throne at least as far back as the 12th or 13th century BC, where an ivory knife handle excavated at Megiddo depicts a king sitting on a winged-sphinx throne, cf. M. Coogan, "10 Great Finds," *BAR* (May/June 1995), p. 41. See also, E. Borowski, "Cherubim: God's Throne?", *BAR* (July/August 1995), pp. 36-41.

[49] The Hebrew expression חשׁיבנו (= turn us) in 80:3 is captured more literally by the KJV's "turn us again" (so also, ESVmg).

[50] It is tempting to see a messianic reference in these passages that speak of the "son" (80:15) and the "son of man" (80:17). Indeed, the Targums took this as a messianic title and paraphrased it as "King Messiah", cf. D. Kidner, *Psalms 73-150 [TOTC]* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), p. 292. Still, the passage is not quoted in the New Testament, and in its ancient reading it probably would have been taken as a reference to the king.

[51] This verb is not the same as the former words translated "turn". Instead, the verb סוג as used here means "to deviate, be disloyal or shrink back", cf. W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 253.

concludes with a congregational plea: "Turn us, LORD God Tsabaoth! Make your face shine upon us that we may be saved" (80:19)![52]

Psalm 88
The Dark Night of the Soul

A song.
A psalm to the sons of Korah.[53]
For the director.
According to "mahalath leannoth".[54]
Maskil.[55]
To Heman the Ezrahite.[56]

The phrase "dark night of the soul" is taken from the writings of St. John of the Cross, who in the 16th century composed his poem and commentary on this difficult phase of spiritual life. While his treatise was not about Psalm 88, it might well have been, since it describes the "dark night" of one who, in spite of a strongly developed prayer life, suddenly finds devotion to God extremely difficult because of the feeling of abandonment. This, in short, is the experience depicted in Psalm 88. There is

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[52] The lyrics to the contemporary hymn "Shine on Us" by Michael W. Smith and Deborah D. Smith is based on the refrain in this psalm, copyright 1996 Milene Music, Inc. and Deer Valley Music/ASCAP:

> *Lord, let your light, light of your face shine on us.*
> *Lord, let your light, light of your face shine on us.*
> *That we may be saved, that we may have life;*
> *To find our way in the darkest night,*
> *Let your light shine on us.*

[53] For the "sons of Korah", see footnote #21 at the beginning of Psalm 45.

[54] The meaning of מָחֲלַת לְעַנּוֹת is very uncertain. The NIV footnote which suggestss "the suffering of affliction" is based on the idea that *mahalath* may be related to the verb חָלָה (*halah*), which refers to a sick or weak person (the same term appears in the superscription of Ps. 53 also). This suggestion has hardly won a consensus. Alternatives are that it simply refers to a tune, cf. *BDB* (1951), p. 318, an antiphonal song, cf. Dahood, *Psalms 51-100 [AB]* (1968), p. 302, or even an instrument, such as a flute, cf. S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. Ap-Thomas (1962), II.210. Even as far back as before the time of Jesus the term was uncertain, as is denoted by the LXX's refusal to translate it and the subsequent transliteration of ὑπὲρ μαελέθ.

[55] See discussion under Psalm 45.

[56] Heman seems to have been the founder of the choir known as the "sons of Korah" (1 Chr. 6:31, 33, 39, 44). Some twenty-two generations of this family are traced in the Bible within the Levitical clan. David had instructed the leaders of the Levites to appoint musicians to perform during liturgical celebrations (1 Chr. 15:16-17). Later, Heman is described as one of those who directed the sounding of trumpets, cymbals and other instruments (1 Chr. 16:41-42), and later still, Heman is listed among those who accompanied the ark in its grand procession into Solomon's temple (2 Chr. 5:12). In addition, he is among those who were described as prophesying with lyres, harps and cymbals (1 Chr. 25:1). Heman himself was named as "the king's seer" (1 Chr. 25:5a). His large family was a blessing derived from a divine oracle that promised him exaltation (1 Chr. 25:4, 5b).

no psalm so bleak as Psalm 88. Whereas other psalms describe experiences of abandonment and wretchedness, including resounding cries for mercy and curses upon enemies, they invariably conclude with a ray of hope that God will in the end turn his face toward the sufferer and rescue him from his desperate circumstances. Not so in Psalm 88. It closes with no thanksgiving, no expressed confidence in the future, and no word exalting God. Rather, the final word in the Hebrew text is "darkness".

The psalm opens with a plea for God to hear (88:1-2). It is the silence of God that is most distressing during such profound depression and suffering. This was also the experience of Job, who moaned, "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help there is no justice" (Job 19:7). To be sure, salvation comes from God alone, but if one pleads both day and night without response, what source of help remains? Job, likewise, prayed, "If only knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling" (Job 23:3), but "if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him" (Job 23:8).

The troubles of the sufferer were agonizing. He felt near death (88:3), that shadowy place from which no one returns. *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל), the most common Old Testament word for the place of the dead, is a place of darkness (88:6), a pit where discarded human life is cut off from memory and care (88:4-5). The writer is not yet dead, of course, but he feels as though he may as well be, since his terrible depression leaves him like one who is in the grave. The repeated expressions, "I am reckoned…among those who go down to the pit" (88:4a) and "I am like…a man without strength" or "like…the slain who lie in [a mass] grave" (88:4b, 5b), speak of his extremity. Though still alive, he ekes out an existence in the darkest of spiritual misery, overwhelmed with waves of tragedy and incomprehensible divine anger (88:7). Three times the poet credits his circumstances to God's wrath (88:7, 14, 15b-17). Like most Old Testament people he cannot apprehend personal disaster in any terms other than God's anger, but what is particularly distressing is that he knows of no cogent reason for God's displeasure. Like Job, who moaned that the "arrows of the Almighty are in me" (Job 6:4) and complained that the advice of his friends was worthless nonsense (Job 13:4-5; 16:1-4; 21:34), this poet moans that he is bereft of friends (88:8a) and imprisoned in a dungeon of suffering from which there seems no escape (88:8b).

In his prayer, the poet cries out daily (88:9). What advantage is there to God that he suffers so? If he dies, how could God be glorified? The dead

cannot praise God for his wonders (88:10, 12)! Those in Abaddon[57] have no perception of his divine love or faithfulness (88:11)! Still, the afflicted sufferer prays even more persistently, spreading out his hands before God, baffled by the divine silence (88:13-14). This is no momentary difficulty, for the pain stretches backward all the way to childhood (88:15a). Bewildered by God's "terrors" (88:15b-17), the sufferer has no resource at all. If he looks upward, God is silent. If he looks to human friends, none are available (88:18, 8). The poem ends with deep and unanswered questions. "The psalmist's one and only colleague is the Darkness. God's abandonment of the psalmist is complete."[58]

Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor of Buchenwald whose mother and sister were murdered at Auschwitz and whose father died of dysentery, starvation and beatings (his father's last spoken word was his son's name, "Eliezer"), was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. His most well-known work is *Night*, in which he describes his experiences during the Holocaust leading to his abandonment of faith.

> *I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes were open and I was alone—terribly alone in a world without God and without man.*
>
> Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1958), trans. Stella Rodway

As dark as is Psalm 88, how different is his response than Elie Wiesel's. Elie felt compelled to abandon his faith, and he did so. He concluded that in light of the Holocaust there could be no God. The suffering poet of Psalm 88 felt abandoned by God, too, but he did not abandon his faith, desperately praying to God day and night. The ancient Christians mystics including St. John of the Cross viewed this dark night of the soul to be a disguised blessing, for they believed it spurred them on from vocal and mental prayer to a deeper contemplative prayer of the soul. The dark night of the soul was the supreme test of faith. This psalm with its unanswered questions and unrelieved suffering leads us to the one place—the only place—where the ultimate mystery of suffering has been unveiled, the cross of Jesus. "It is there alone that the God, who is hidden in the uttermost depths of suffering, has at the same time been revealed; it is there that we find an inexhaustible source of comfort."[59]

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[57] The Hebrew word אבדון (*'abadon*) is a poetic synonym for the abode of the dead appearing only a few times in the Hebrew Bible (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Pro. 15:11; 27:20). It's primary meaning is derived from the verb אָבַד (*'abad* = to be lost or ruined, to perish). It reoccurs in a transliterated form in the Apocalypse of John (9:11).

[58] Dahood, *Psalms 51-100 [AB]*, p. 307.

[59] Weiser, p. 587.

Psalm 75
Man Proposes, God Disposes

For the director.
According to "Do Not Destroy".
Mizmor.
To Asaph.
A song.

This psalm is about power. Who has it? How much personal power does one individual have? Can a human being really chart his own course in the world? Are there such things as "self-made" women and men? The controlling metaphor in Psalm 75 is the horn (75:4, 5, 10). The use of this metaphor stretches back into antiquity in the ancient Near East. At a domestic level, of course, the horned bull or ox was the most powerful of farm animals. Goring animals were legislated against in both the Code of Hammurabi and in the Torah of Moses:

> *If an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a seignior to death, that case is not subject to claim. If a seignior's ox was a gorer and his city council made it know to him that it was a gorer, but he did not pad its horns (or) tie up his ox, and that ox gored to death a member of the aristocracy, he shall give one half mina of silver.*
>
> Code of Hammurabi, #250-251[60]

> *If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull must be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death. However, if payment is demanded of him, he may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded.*
>
> Exodus 21:28-30

Deities in the ancient Near East were commonly depicted with horns, and pagan images like Ba'al were shown riding on the back of a horned bull. As a metaphor, the horn figuratively suggests power. To take away someone's power is to "cut off" his horn (cf. Je. 48:25; Zec. 1:20-21), while to bestow power is to "exalt the horn" (Ps. 92:10). Horns could symbolize the power of kings (Zec. 1:18-19), and a succession of horns could symbolize a royal dynasty (Ps. 132:17). The abuse of power is depicted as "butting all the

[60] J. Prtichard, *ANET* (1969), p. 176.

weak sheep with your horns" (Eze. 34:21). Hence, the NIV often footnotes this poetic metaphor with the notation "horn here symbolizes strength". The same metaphor figures prominently in Hannah's Song, where she says, "In Yahweh my horn is lifted high!" (1 Sa. 2:1).

A second metaphor, also, is important: the "cup of foaming wine mixed with spices" (75:8a).[61] This is a figure of judgment often found in the poetry of the prophets (cf. Is. 51:21-23; Je. 25:15-29; 49:12; Eze. 23:31-34; Hab. 2:16; Zec. 12:2; Rv. 14:9-10; 18:6b). The most common mixture was wine diluted with water, but here, the mixture of wine with spices intends to depict a particularly potent liquid symbolizing the potency of Yahweh's judgment.

The Psalm opens with a thanksgiving for all God's "wonderful deeds" (75:1). The recitation of God's mighty acts in the context of public worship has been a standard liturgical form since the ancient days of Israel (cf. Ps. 71:16, 24; 105:2; 106:2; 145:4, 11-12; 150:2). The parallelism between "God" and his "name" is striking, since God's name is often used as a synecdoche for God himself. Here, his name is personified, for God's name (and, hence, his presence) is "near".

Very quickly the psalm transitions to its main point, the sovereignty of God. It is God who orders time in the universe. He seizes the day and passes just judgment (75:2). Though God may appear to be inactive during certain periods, no one can make his decisions for him. He acts in sovereign, first person freedom.[62] When there is turmoil in the earth so that its foundations seem to crumble, it is God who stabilizes the structure (75:3),[63] or to put it in New Testament terms, he "sustains all things by his powerful word" (He. 1:3). In particular, this truth serves as a warning to the arrogant power-brokers who think power resides in themselves (75:4). In elevating their own sense of power with an "insolent neck" (75:5),[64] they challenge God's power.

But God's sovereignty cannot be thwarted. He alone exalts, judges, and brings down (75:6-7). Search where you will—be it in the east, the west or the wilderness—God only is in control. Here, the psalm echoes the ancient words of Hannah (1 Sa. 2:6-7):

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[61] The term **מסך** (= mixed with spices) occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible, but the word is known from Ugaritic, cf. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150) [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 550.

[62] In Hebrew grammar, the pronominal subjects of verbs are included in the verbal spellings. However, when a definite pronoun is added, as is done here (**אני**), then the first person action is sharply underscored.

[63] The metaphor of the universe as constructed on pillars is quite old (cf. Job 9:6; 26:11).

[64] The rare word **עתק** means "forward", but symbolically depicts "insolence", cf. Holladay, p. 287.

Yahweh brings death and makes alive;
He brings down to the grave and raises up.
Yahweh sends poverty and wealth;
He humbles and he exalts.

Most important, it is God who executes final judgment. He passes around the foaming cup of mixed wine from which all the power-brokers of the earth will drink to the dregs (75:8). Centuries later, John will appeal to this same imagery in saying that the wicked "will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath" (Rv. 14:10). Man proposes; God disposes! As the old saw says, "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine!" James in the New Testament echoes this same wisdom:

> *Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.*
>
> James 4:13-16

The psalm concludes with a personal declaration, a song of God's sovereignty (75:9).[65] Whether the "I" in the final verse is the poet himself, who as God's devoted servant will participate in God's final victory at the end, or is intended to be God's own proclamation of victory, harking back to the first person divine pronouns of 75:2-3, is not immediately clear. The grammar of the Hebrew text (and the LXX) implies the former, but the latter fits the larger context of the exaltation of God's sovereignty. Indeed, the RSV changes the "I" to "he" in this line, though the NRSV changes it back again. Regardless, the wicked will be dehorned, and the power of the righteous will be exalted! As Derek Kidner has aptly stated, "There will be a time for power without aggression, and glory without pride."[66]

Psalm 22
The Psalm of the Cross [67]

[65] Some translations, following the LXX, have "rejoice" instead of "declare" (so RSV, NAB). The difference is only a single letter (**אגיד** in the MT and **אגיל** in the LXX).
[66] Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, p. 273.
[67] I have used Derek Kidner's title, because it is simply the best.

For the Director.
According to "The Doe of the Morning".[68]
To David.[69]

If ever there were a statement that a deep and powerful relationship exists between God and the individual human sufferer, surely this is it! The alternating first person sections ("I" and "me" in 22:1-2, 6-8, 12-18) and third person sections (the divine "You" in 22:3-5, 9-11, 19-21) throb with the reality of such a relationship. Although it is popular among some exegetes to treat the individual in this psalm as an archetype of the community, there is no strong reason internal to the psalm for denying that it expresses the experience of a real person. Granted, the conclusion sets the final praise for deliverance in the context of the congregation (22:22, 25), and this is as it should be. Still, testimony in the congregation is preceded by the acute distress of personal anxiety, persecution and helplessness—a state of pitiable exhaustion that only God could remedy.

The psalm proceeds in two sections. The first and longest consists of the laments and prayers of the sufferer (22:1-21). Here, the dialogue is profoundly personal between the afflicted individual and his God. Then comes the testimony of God's deliverance that expands from the rescue of a single individual (22:24) to the salvation of the very ends of the earth (22:27) and a people yet unborn (22:31). This vision for the future is so breathtaking that it takes in the whole human family (22:27b-28) and all future generations (22:30).

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[68] The LXX renders the title as "concerning help in the morning", and this translation follows a reading of אילות (= help) rather than אילת (= doe). Morning, after a long night of distress, is commonly the time designated for God's help (cf. Ps. 30:5; 46:5; 59:16; 90:14; 101:8; 143:8).

[69] The title "to David" has engendered considerable scholarly discussion. Nearly half the psalms have this title, and traditionally, the title has been taken simply to mean that the psalms so-headed were composed by the historical David. David was "Israel's singer of songs" (2 Sa. 23:1), not to mention a skilled improviser with musical instruments (Am. 6:5). The Dead Sea Scrolls claims that David wrote 3600 psalms, 364 songs for the daily sacrifice, 52 more songs for Sabbath offerings, and 30 more for New Moons and annual festivals, cf. "David's Compositions" (11QPs[a]), Abegg, Flint & Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), p. 583. Certainly the earliest Christians had no hesitance in ascribing to David some of the Psalms (cf. Ac. 1:16; 2:25; Ro. 4:6; 11:9; He. 4:7), not to mention Jesus himself (Mt. 22:43; Lk. 20:42). Subsequent scholars, however, have suggested that the title "to David" may only mean "in honor of David" or "in honor of David's dynasty" or "in behalf of David". They point out anachronisms, such as temple references, even though the temple was not yet built in David's lifetime (e.g., Ps. 5:7; 24:7, 9), or references to linguistic improbabilities, such as Aramaisms (Ps. 139), cf. L. Allen, *Psalm 101-150 [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), p. 260. Such challenges must be taken seriously, and they may very well mean that the title "to David" warrants more than a single meaning. These problems notwithstanding, Weiser's assertion that "none of the names mentioned in the titles of the psalms designates the real author" (p. 95) is too sweeping. It does not seem unlikely that among the psalms are genuine compositions by David, though as Craigie has pointed out, that conclusion does not rest simply on the title "to David", cf. P. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50 [WBC]* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), p. 35.

Abandonment by God (22:1-21)

The haunting prayer that opens the first strophe focuses upon the question that nearly all human beings ask in times of distress: "Why?" Why has God allowed this to happen? Why doesn't he do something? Why does he seem so far away? Why does he not answer my prayers (22:1-2)? Who has not felt this overwhelming sense of helplessness before circumstances that are beyond human remedy? Philip Yancey is surely correct when he says that the questions lodged somewhere inside all of us are, "Is God unfair? Is God silent? Is God hidden?" Succinctly, here is the problem as he puts it:

> *True atheists do not, I presume, feel disappointed in God. They expect nothing and receive nothing. But those who commit their lives to God, no matter what, instinctively expect something in return. Are those expectations wrong?*[70]

Despite the problem, the sufferer in Psalm 22 refuses to wallow in it. Turning from despair, he raises his thoughts to God, who is enthroned between the cherubim, dwelling in the midst of his people (22:3).[71] If he cannot perceive the nearness of God from the vantage point of his own exhausted state, he at least can find an anchor in the testimonies of the past. The ancients put their trust in Yahweh, and that trust was well placed, for God delivered them (22:4-5). However much they may have suffered, in the end they were not disappointed!

Then, however, he turns back to his present crisis. Exalting the past has its proper place, but remembering what God did for the ancients does not change the present. The emphatic "but I" (22:6)[72] refocuses on the present. As a self-described worm—a creature that is the most defenseless of all (Job 25:6; Is. 41:14)—he keenly felt his inadequacy to cope. He was the object of scorn, rejection and ridicule, suffering insult upon insult while listening to an unrelenting mockery against his faith (22:7-8). The verbal put-downs and grave head-shaking of the mockers always seem to urge that God, if he is God at all, must be there for our convenience. When one continues to trust

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[70] P. Yancey, *Disappointment with God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), pp. 30, 32.

[71] How to take the final phrase "praises of Israel" in 22:3b is unclear. As it stands, there is no preposition "on", even though some translations opt for "thou art…enthroned on the praises of Israel: (so RSV, ESV, NASB, KJV). The other option is to take the phrase as an object of the verb, i.e., "you are the enthroned Holy One; you [are] the Praise of Israel" (so NIV, NAB, NEB).

[72] The first person pronoun אנכי (= I) is unnecessary, since it is included in the verb, but to use it anyway marks the construction as emphatic.

God in the face of unrelieved adversity, the mockers are the first to suggest abandoning the faith.

What the mocker does not see, indeed cannot see, is that the faith of this sufferer was imbibed from his mother's milk (22:9). His was no casual acquaintance with God, but a life-long relationship (22:10). It is upon this basis that he can cry out for God to be near when trouble is near (22:11).

Turning once more to his desperate plight, he pours forth a litany of metaphors describing his extremity. He is surrounded by threatening bulls (22:12),[73] attacking lions (22:13, 21a),[74] hungry dog packs (22:16a, 20b)[75] and wild oxen (22:21b). Of course, all these metaphors describe personal enemies, not animals (22:16b). Such enemies stare and gloat, driven by a mob mentality, unmitigated greed and personal advancement as they quarrel over the last pickings of the one they have attacked (22:17-18). In the midst of such aggression, the sufferer keenly feels his personal weakness. The metaphors of being poured out like water with a heart like melted wax denotes his loss of courage and mental fortitude to cope (22:14). His nerve is a brittle as a dried pottery shard. His mouth is dry. Death seems imminent (22:15). His persecutors have pierced his hands and feet (22:16b),[76] while his emaciated condition leaves his bones protruding from under his skin (22:17a).

So, he prays in desperation! God is his only hope now. If he is to be delivered, it will be God who comes near, God who helps, and God who rescues (22:19-21). The metonymy for God, "O my Strength," suggests that the sufferer's human resources have altogether failed. Only God can save him from the sword of execution and the pariah dogs that wait to devour him.

The final, declarative word in 22:21 (22:22 in the Hebrew Text) at last gives voice to deliverance in the perfect tense: *You answered me*(**עניתני**)*!* Some English versions transform this word into an imperative, so that it becomes part of the prayer for deliverance (so NIV). This seems unlikely to be the case. Other versions, following the LXX, emend the text to **עניי** (= my poor [soul]), taking the word as a substantive with a possessive

[73] Bashan, an upland pasture east of the Jordan, was particularly suitable for breeding cattle.

[74] Skeletal remains of Iron Age Asian lions have been excavated recently in Palestine, cf. *ABD* (1992) VI.1143.

[75] Pariah dogs scavenged in packs on the outskirts of the Palestinian towns, cf. *ABD* (1992) VI.1143.

[76] The MT reads **כארי** (= like a lion), but virtually all major English translations follow the LXX at this point, which reads ὤρυξαν (= they pierced). The MT ('like a lion [are] my hands and my feet") makes no sense, and in addition to the LXX, the Dead Sea Scrolls support the reading "they pierced" (5/6HevPs).

pronoun.[77] Still other English versions retain the Hebrew but connect it to the foregoing phrase: "You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen" (so ESV, NASB, KJV, ASV, NRSV)! None of these options seem as compelling as the Hebrew simply as it stands, a single, declarative word that God has answered the prayer of his suffering servant![78] If so, this interjection stands between the two parts of the psalm, providing a transition from the one section to the other.

The Testimony (22:22-31)

Based on the transition introduced by the final word in 22:21 (Hebrew Text 22:22), "You answered me!", the final section of the Psalm sets forth the testimony of God's redeeming power. This deliverance is worthy to be recounted to the whole congregation (22:22)! Probably, this would have been in the context of a votive feast in which, if an Israelite in distress made a vow to God, when his prayer was answered he held a feast for his family, servants, friends and the Levites. Together they would celebrate before God (cf. Lv. 7:16; Dt. 12:17-19). All who revered Yahweh should now praise him for his power to save (22:23)! Though the enemies of the afflicted man might despise him (cf. 22:6-8), God had not done so (22:24)! At the great pilgrim festivals in the midst of the whole congregation of Israel, the testimony of God's great deliverance would be rehearsed (22:25). Even the poor would be invited to share in the feast (22:26). Craigie offers the interesting suggestion that the phrase, "May your hearts live forever," may be a toast to his fellow diners—"a significant toast from one who stood so recently on the threshold of death."[79]

From the community of Israel, the testimony of God's deliverance now broadens to include the very ends of the earth and the families of the nations (22:27-28). Yahweh is not a provincial God—he rules over all! The wealthy will lay aside their presumed superiority, joining the others in feasting and worship (22:29a). Even the dead will bow their knee before Yahweh (22:29b).[80] Their posterity in future generations also will hear the testimony of God's saving grace. The proclamation of God's righteous

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[77] Here, the word ends up as "my afflicted soul" (RSV), "my wretched life" (NAB), "my poor body" (NEB), "my poor soul" (JB)

[78] Craigie, pp. 195, 200;Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 108; Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 191; Kraus, p. 298.

[79] Craigie, p. 201.

[80] This anticipation that the dead in Sheol will worship Yahweh reaches a higher vision than is typical of this ancient period, when the inhabitants of Sheol are generally considered to be bereft of the opportunity for worship (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 88:12; 115:17-18).

faithfulness[81] will be proclaimed to a people not yet born. The psalm ends with a single exclamatory word: *He did [it]!* It is God who has done it—God alone!

The Messianic Overtones

Like Psalm 2 and 110, Psalm 22 very early was taken as foreshadowing the sufferings of Christ. No doubt, such an interpretation seemed firmly fixed, since Christ himself quoted the opening lines while hanging on the cross, his words being preserved in both Aramaic (Mk. 15:34) and Hebrew (Mt. 27:46). That Jesus would pray the ancient words of the psalm in his moment of deepest distress suggests that this was a pattern of prayer familiar to him, and in fact, may provide a model for allowing the words of an ancient person of faith to speak for the modern person who may not know how to articulate what is most deeply felt. Certainly St. Paul is frank about admitting that sometimes we "do not know what we ought to pray" (Ro. 8:26).

It may well be that Jesus formally introduced the messianic character of this psalm to his disciples, when he explained that "everything must be fulfilled…in the Torah, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Lk.24:44). This sort of fulfillment, of course, is not so much along the lines of direct prediction and verification, but more along the lines of recapitulation—the fulfillment of reliving at a later time what already has happened at an earlier time. Though not uttered concerning this psalm, Peter's words at Pentecost provide the longstanding Christian framework: "But he [David] was a prophet and knew what God had promised…"

In reflecting upon the event of the cross, the Beloved Disciple quoted Ps. 22:18, a passage that describes the soldiers gambling for Christ's clothes (Jn. 19:23-24; cf. Mk. 15:24; Lk. 23:34b).[82] The writer of Hebrews, in describing how Christ's mission was completed through suffering—a suffering of the same kind as experienced by the whole human family—quotes Ps. 22:22, where the sufferer triumphantly announced that he would declare God's name to his brothers (He. 2:10-12). Clearly in applying this to

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[81] The term צדקה (*tsedeqah* = righteousness) especially describes putting things right, and with respect to ethics, it especially tends toward divine favor shown to the poor and needy, cf. N. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), pp. 88-93.

[82] In some manuscripts of Matthew, the parallel passage about dividing up Christ's clothes includes the interpolation, "…that the word spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled: 'They divided my garments among themselves and cast lots for my clothing'" (Mt. 27:35). The Textus Receptus includes this phrase, which is how it comes to be in the KJV and NKJV, even though it is absent in the major early codices (**א** B A D L W **Γ** and **Π**), cf. B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 69.

Christ, who calls the members of the human family his “brothers” because of his incarnation, this New Testament writer understood Psalm 22 to be messianic.

Beyond such direct quotations, however, are several possible, perhaps probable, allusions to Psalm 22. The suffering of the first section of the psalm followed by the triumph of the last section may very well lie behind Peter’s statement about “the sufferings of Christ” and “the glories that would follow” (1 Pe. 1:11). Jesus’ own statements about his rejection in Jerusalem may well draw upon the rejection of the sufferer in this psalm (Mk. 9:12). The gospel words about those who passed by the cross, shaking their heads, insulting and mocking him, and saying, “Let God rescue him now if he wants him”, show striking verbal parallels with the language of the psalm (22:6-8; Mt. 27:39-44//Mk. 15:29-32). Not a few Christians have noted that the description of desperate thirst in the psalm matches the outcry of thirst by Christ (22:15; Jn. 19:28). The piercing of Jesus’ hands and feet in crucifixion seem to echo the words, “They pierced my hands and my feet” (22:16b), while the description of protruding bones (22:17a) and bones out of joint (22:14b) are certainly apropos to crucifixion. If the final word in 22:21 is taken as an independent declaration, “He heard me!”, it fits very well with the description that in Christ’s prayers and loud cries and tears, “he was heard because of his reverent submission” (He. 5:7b)! Finally, that the testimony of God’s saving grace will be witnessed to “the ends of the earth” (22:27) and that “all the families of the nations will bow down before him” is echoed in Paul’s hymn that “every knee shall bow” (Phil. 2:10). Every Christian who has accepted the faith of Christ is included in that final verse: *They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn! He has done it!* So, it is not without reason that the Book of Common Prayer cites Psalm 22 alongside Isaiah 53 for the reading on Good Friday.