

The greatest songbook in the world

# SESSION 1

## 1. Intro part 1: Why we cannot ignore the Psalms

**Discuss:** In the verses below, which different people are speaking? Who are they speaking about?

What do these different verses have in common?

- Hebrews 1.5a; 1.8-9, 10-12, 13; 2.12;

- Acts 2.25-28, 34-36; 13.33, 35;

- John 2.16-17; 13.18; 15.25; 19.23-24, 28, 36;

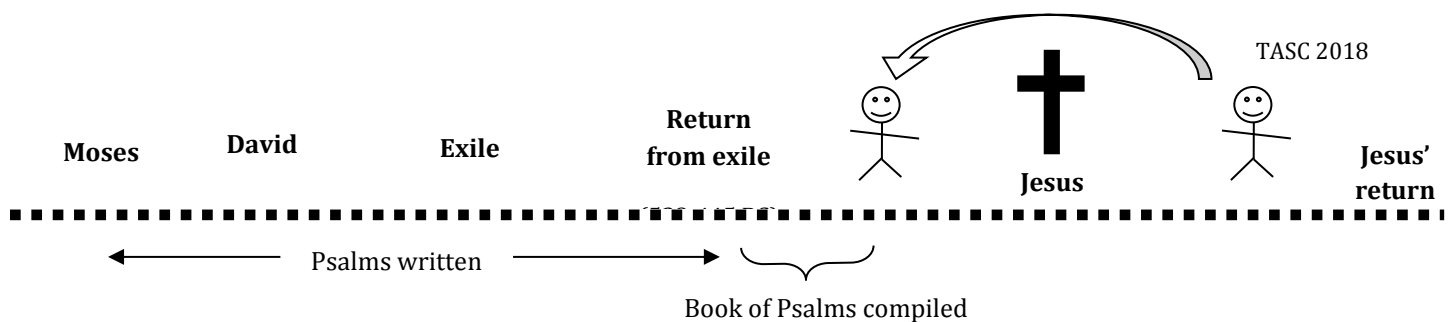
- Mark 11.9; 12.6-11, 35-57;

[Also see, *for example*: Matt 13.34-35, 27.43, 46; Luke 23.46; Acts 4.11, 25-27; Rom 15.3; Eph 4.7-8; Heb 5.5-6, 7.17, 21, 10.5-7; 1 Pet 2.4-7; Rev 12.5, 19.15]

So, the **BIGGEST** reason we love the Psalms is:

## 2. Intro part 2: How to read the Psalms

### a) The Bible is one book (and it matters where we are)



### b) The Psalms are one book (and it matters where they are)

- not a novel, or a dictionary; a bit like an art gallery?

### 3. The Big Bible Story Part 1: Why we & our world are a mess

**Psalms 1:** "Who will you listen to?"

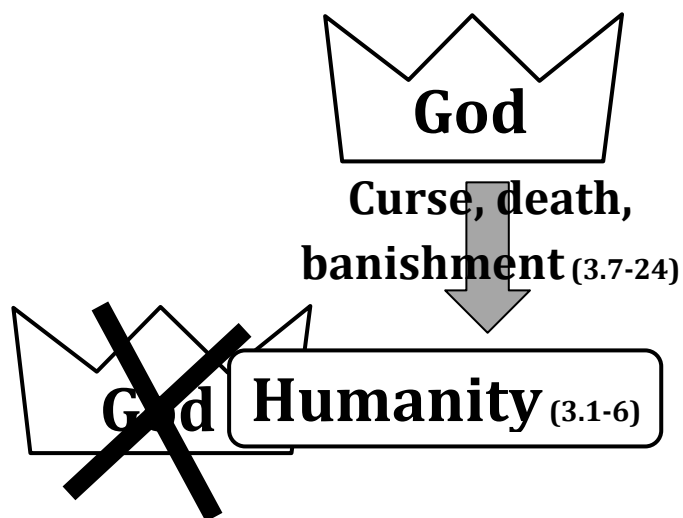
**Discuss:** What are the other main 'voices' around you in your particular situation?

What are the main things they say which are different to what God says?

**Genesis 3:** And this has always been the issue: v1-6

And this is the cause of every other issue: v7-24

**Psalms 2.1-3:** And so we live in a world in rebellion



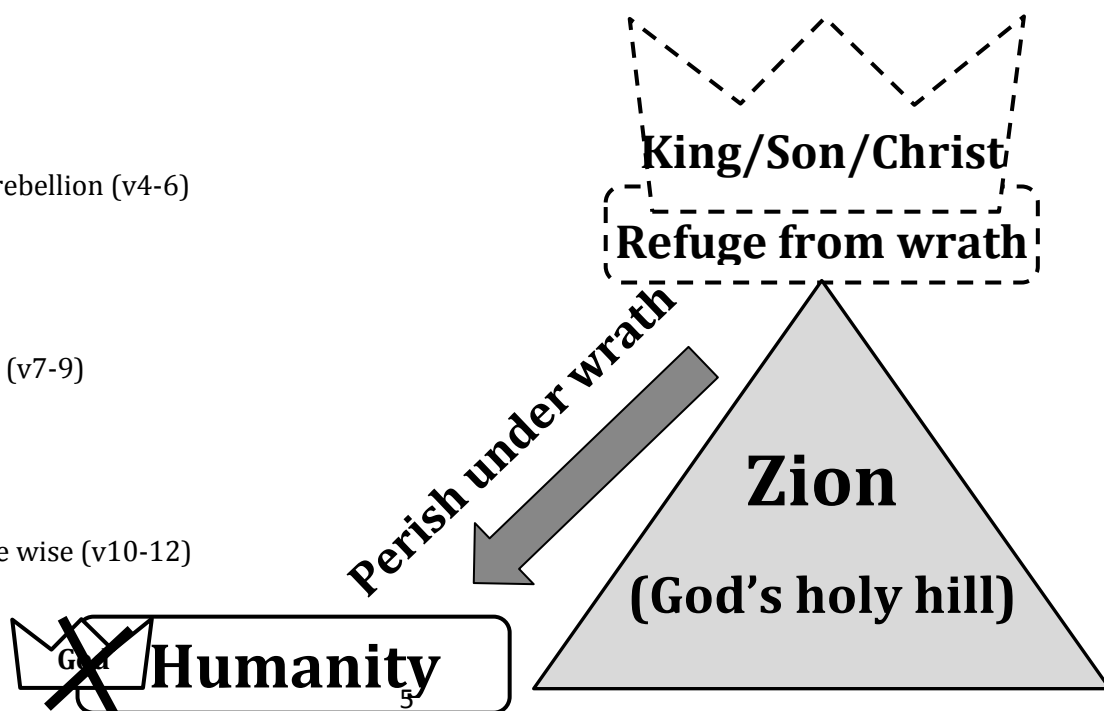
### 4. The Big Bible Story Part 2: There is a king who gives refuge from his wrath

**Psalms 2**

- God's response to rebellion (v4-6)

- The rule of the Son (v7-9)

- The response of the wise (v10-12)



**Discuss:** How does the message of Psalm 2 differ to what your non-Christian friends/family think Christianity is about?

How does the message of Psalm 2 compare to how you usually think of the Christian message? How does it challenge or expand what you usually think?

## **5. Book I: The Story Begins – the king who *nearly* delivers**

### **Psalm 8: A flashback to Eden?**

v5-8: God made humanity to perfectly rule creation (Gen 1.28-31)

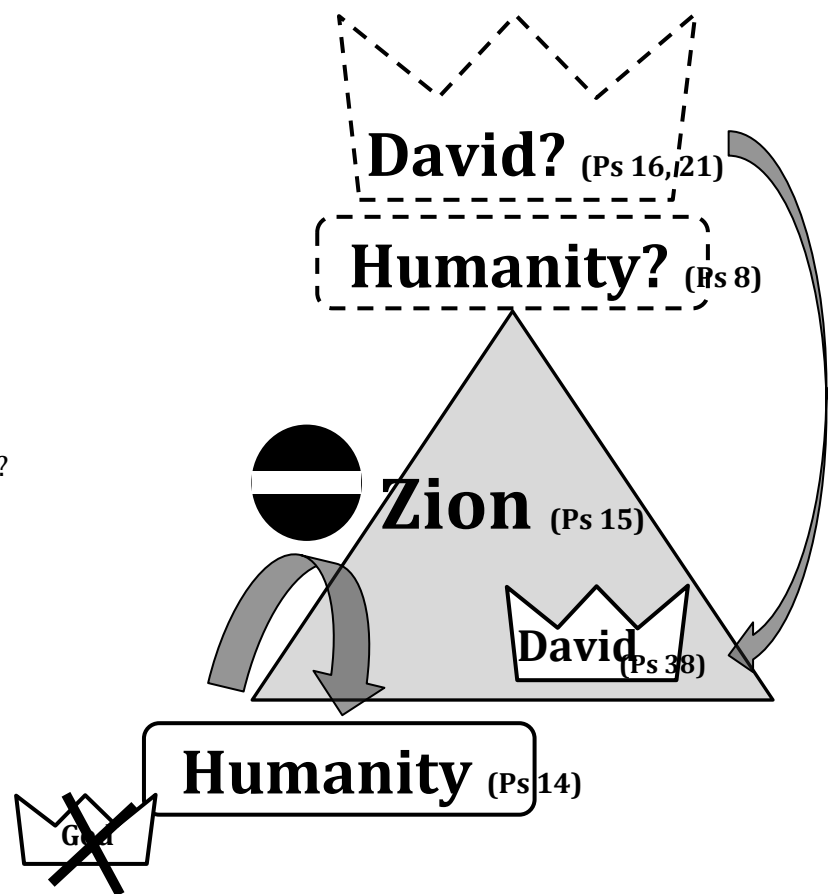
But human sin brought an end to that...

### **Psalm 14: Humanity's real present state (v1-4)**

– and a cry for rescue from Zion! (v5-7)

So where is the king who'll bring refuge on Zion?

### **Psalm 15: Well, this is Zion's door policy:**



### **So, David: confident of Zion?**

**Psalm 16:** good times are coming (v6) – and security (v8, 10) – for your holy one (10), in your presence! (11)

**Psalm 21:** rule forever (4), in glory & majesty (5), in your presence (6) – enjoying total victory over evil (8-12)

### **No, David himself needs rescue**

**Psalm 25:** from enemies (2), from sin (6-7, 11) – depending on God's steadfast love (6-7)

**Psalm 38:** wrath (1), suffering (3, 5-8), wicked opposition (12, 19), distance from God (21)



## SESSION 2

**Discuss:** So far in the Psalms, what has God told us about a) Zion, and b) his king?

### 6. Book II: The Story Connects – this is *our* story too

#### Psalm 42-43: sometimes, life really sucks

Tears & mockery (42.3), downcast & turmoil (42.5), overwhelmed (42.7)

Why? We're away from Zion (42.2b, 4, 5b; 43.3-4)

#### This is our situation too (Heb 11.13-16, 12.22, 13.13-14)

#### Psalm 44: sometimes, life feels like defeat & rejection

You're the King who brings victory (1-3)

And we trusted You for victory (4-8)

But You've brought defeat, disaster & disgrace (9-16)

...even though we're with You! (17-22)

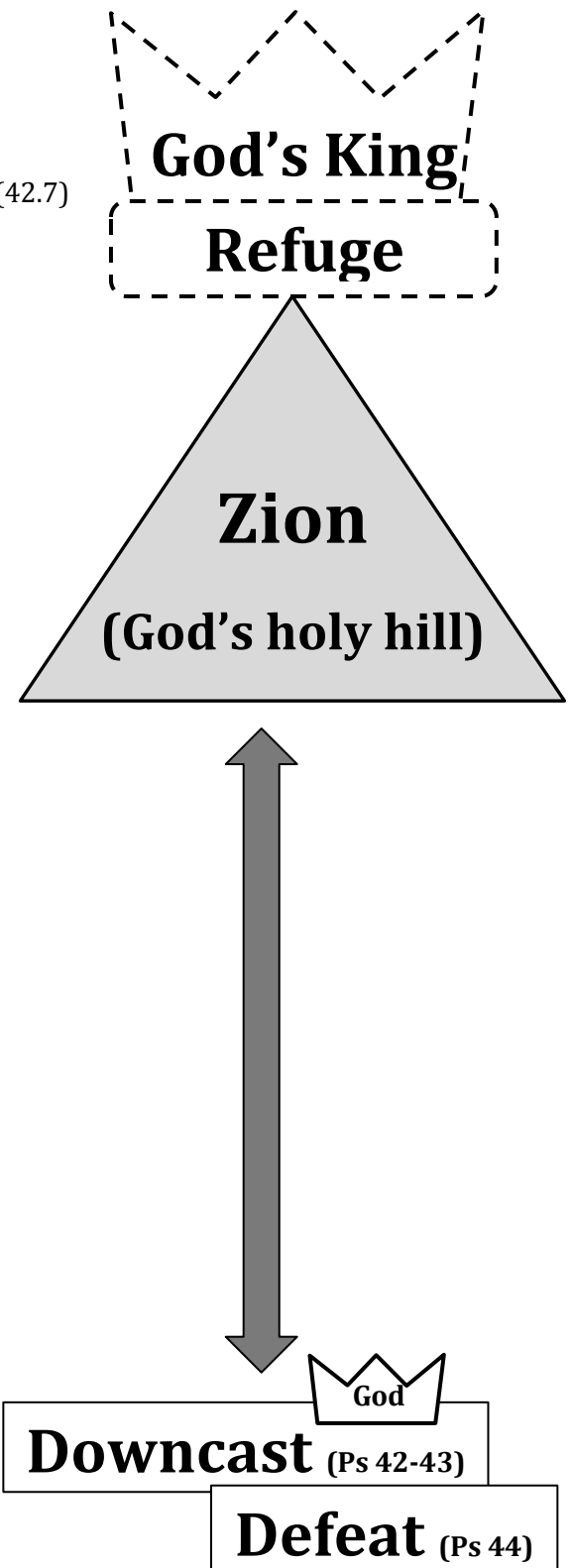
So we cry for rescue, depending on your steadfast love! (23-26)

#### This is our situation too (Rom 8.31-39)

**Discuss:** In what wrong ways do/could we react when we feel similar emotions to these Psalms (downcast, rejected, turmoil etc.)?

How might Psalms 42-43 and/or 44 help us respond to God in a better way in these times?

How could you use these Psalms to help a Christian friend who was feeling similar things?



## **7. Book II: The Promises Grow – an ultimate king will deliver an amazing Zion!**

### **Psalm 45: But the ultimate king will come!**

**This king:** Total goodness, total supremacy (2-5)

Total divinity? (6-8)

[Flash-forward – Heb 1.8-9: remember,

this is our story too!]

**His bride:** Total devotion (10-11)

Total glory (12-15)

**Discuss:** What about Jesus (who he is, what he is like etc.) does Psalm 45 help you appreciate more?

How does this help us to respond to him with total devotion (as his bride is urged to)? What would this look like for you in your situation?

### **Psalm 46-48: And Zion will be an incredible refuge**

**Psalm 46:** without fear (1-3)

because God gives utter safety (4-11)

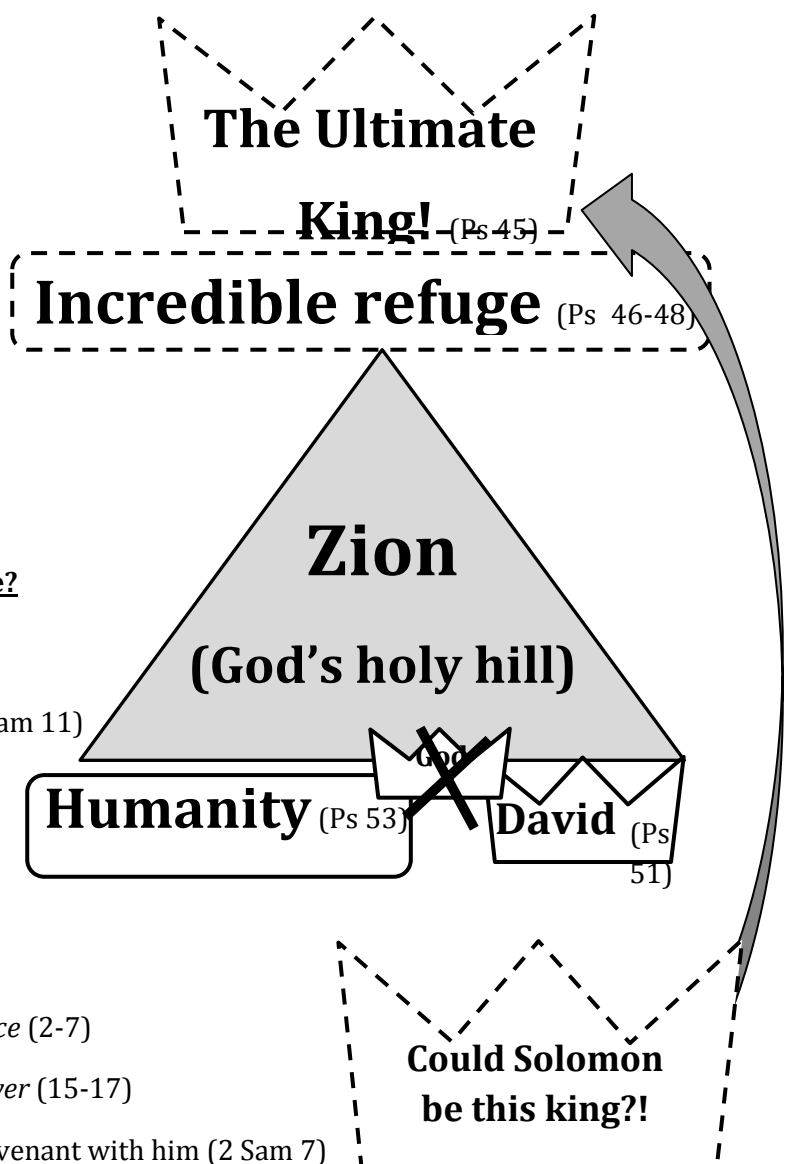
**Psalm 47:** where God reigns victorious

- *for people from all nations* (v9)

**Psalm 48:** where God makes himself known

in beauty (1-2), in His protection (3-8),

in His steadfast love (9-14)



## **8. Book II: The Story Hopes – could he be the one?**

**Psalm 50:** But this will not be for the wicked

**Psalm 51:** And this even includes David (see 2 Sam 11)

**Psalm 53:** In fact, this includes everyone

Rom 3.9-19 – this is still our story

(even if we wish it wasn't)

### **Psalm 72: could Solomon be this king?**

*The royal son* (1) – *justice, prosperity & peace* (2-7)

*global rule* (8-11) – *a rescuer* (12-14) – *forever* (15-17)

**David had good reason to think so!** – God's Covenant with him (2 Sam 7)

- His son will rule (12) - His kingdom will last forever (13, 16)

- His people will be blessed (10)

**But that's not the only promise in David's mind...** even further back, God made a Covenant with Abraham

- The land (72.8-10; Gen 15.18-21)

- The blessing to all nations (72.17; Gen 12.3)

## 9. Book III: The Story Collapses – dark despair descends

### The Exile - in His wrath, God destroys Israel

**Psalm 74:** God's wrath (1) against Israel (2-3) has destroyed them (4-8)

**Psalm 79:** Zion is defiled, Israel are dead (1-4) because of God's anger (5)

**Psalm 89:** God promised that David's throne would stand forever (1-37)

But now, in wrath, He has rejected David's line & destroyed Zion (38-51)

### The Questioning – why on earth has God done this?

**Psalm 77:** I am in great anguish (1-3), because it looks like it's all over (4-9)

**Psalm 80:** You planted & grew our nation (8-11),  
so why then have you destroyed it? (12-13?)

### The Explanation – the Covenant with Moses was

conditional on Israel's obedience

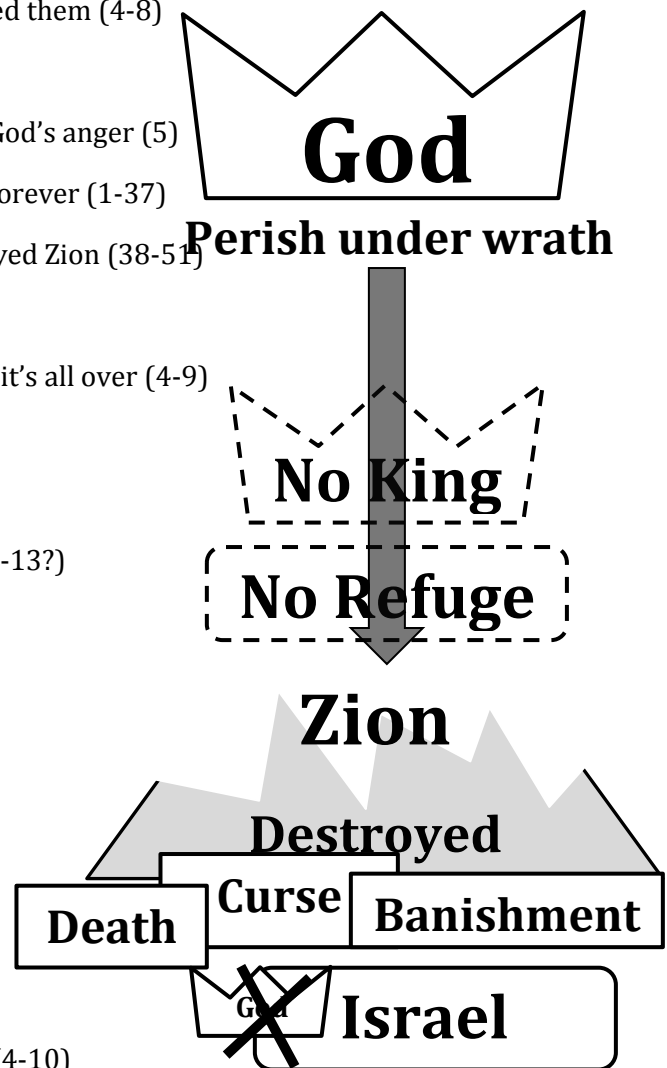
**Psalm 78:** God gave Israel a law to obey (5-8)

But Israel were persistently rebellious  
(9-11, 17-20, 22, 32, 36-37, 40-42, 56-64),  
despite all God's kindness and warnings  
(12-16, 21, 23-31, 33-35, 38-39, 43-55, 65-72)

**Psalm 81:** When God rescued Israel, he gave them his law (4-10)

But Israel would not listen (11), so God gave them over to their own ways (12)

As God promised He would: Exodus 19.5, 20.4-7, 23.20-33; Deut 28.



**Discuss:** What does the Exile teach us about God? How do you feel about God being like this?

How does knowing these things about him, help us respond to him in the right way?

What parallels can you see between the Exile, and Psalms 1-2 and Genesis 3 (see section 3 from yesterday)?

What does the Exile teach us about Israel? What, by extension, does it teach about humanity in general?

### The (painful) hints of hope – some VERY surprising pictures!

**Psalm 84:** God dwelling in Zion

**Psalm 85:** God blessing the land

**Psalm 86:** God vindicating his king

**Psalm 87:** God calling the nations to Zion





## SESSION 3

**Discuss:** How have we been left feeling at this stage through the Psalms? What questions might we have?

### 10. Book IV: The Story Looks Back – the Exile is neither *new* nor *hopeless*

**Psalm 90:** God is eternal, but we are dust (1-6)

because we are sinful & God is angry (7-12)

Remember Genesis 3? Psalm 2?

[And in case you missed it... **Psalm 94, 95, 96, 97, 98**]

So **true wisdom** looks like:

**Discuss:** What should human mortality teach us, according to Psalm 90?

How does this differ to what our culture thinks about death?

**Psalm 103:** God's **STEADFAST LOVE** is the answer to human sin (48.9, 51.1)

Cry for pity & satisfaction (90.13-14) – but God answers (103.3-5)

God is angry at sin (90.7-11) – but treats us in mercy (103.9-10)

We are like dust & fade like grass (90.3, 5)

– but God knows & has compassion (103.13-15)

**Psalm 105:** And God has not abandoned his

Covenant with Abraham

He has been faithful to his promise to Abraham

to give the Promised Land (7-11, 42-45)

As he rescued Israel through Joseph (12-22),

from Egypt (23-38), and in the wilderness (39-41)

**Psalm 106:** And it is in God's nature to show mercy to rebellious people

His love endures forever! (1-5)

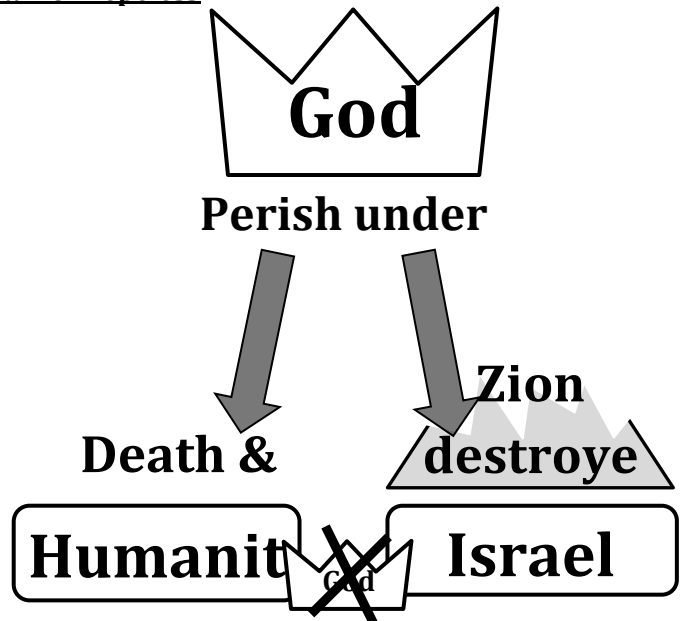
At the Red Sea (6-12; Ex 14-15): they sinned – **yet He saved them**

In the wilderness (13-23; Num 16, Ex 32): they sinned; He judged – **yet He saved them** (through a mediator)

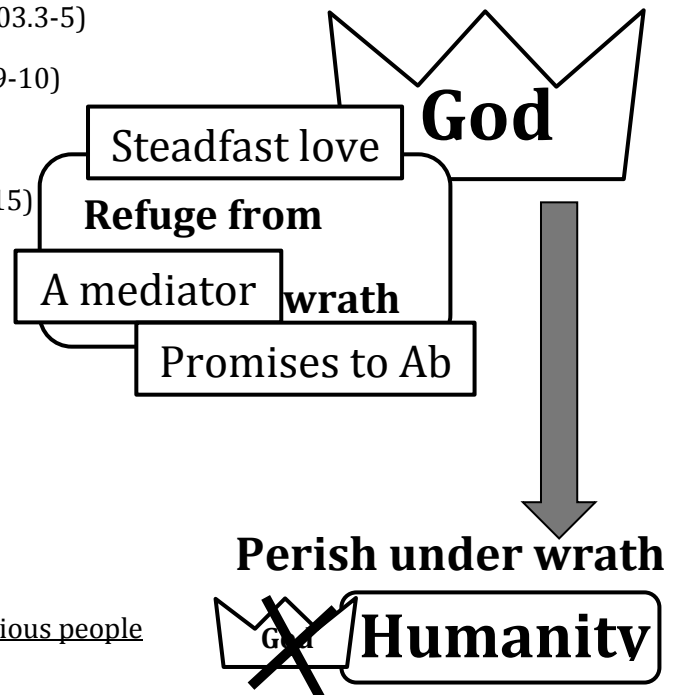
In the wilderness (24-33; Num 13-14, 25): they sinned; He judged – **yet He saved them** (through another mediator)

In the Promised Land (34-46): they sinned; He judged – **yet he saved them**

So again, now, save us, O LORD (47)



(Of course! Remember 25.6-7, 44.26,



## **11. Book V: The Story Looks Ahead – God’s king will come, bringing us to a new Zion!**

A new, greater King David will come

**Psalm 110:** A king greater than David will come (1)

Who will reign from Zion (2-3)

He will be an eternal priest-mediator (4)

(Gen 14.18-20)

And totally victorious (5-7)

**Psalm 118:** The rejected stone will be the cornerstone (22)

Bringing blessing from Zion (26)

**Psalm 132:** God’s promise to David still stands (11)

When the obedient one comes (12)

**Answering the cries of Psalm 89!**

This is our king: Jesus, the Christ, the Son of David

**Psalm 2:** The Son who will rule the nations (Heb 1.5)

**Psalm 8:** The perfect human being who will rule creation (Heb 2.5-9)

**Psalm 16:** The Holy One who will never see decay (Acts 2.25-29)

**Psalm 45:** The royal husband who will love his bride (Heb 1.8-9)

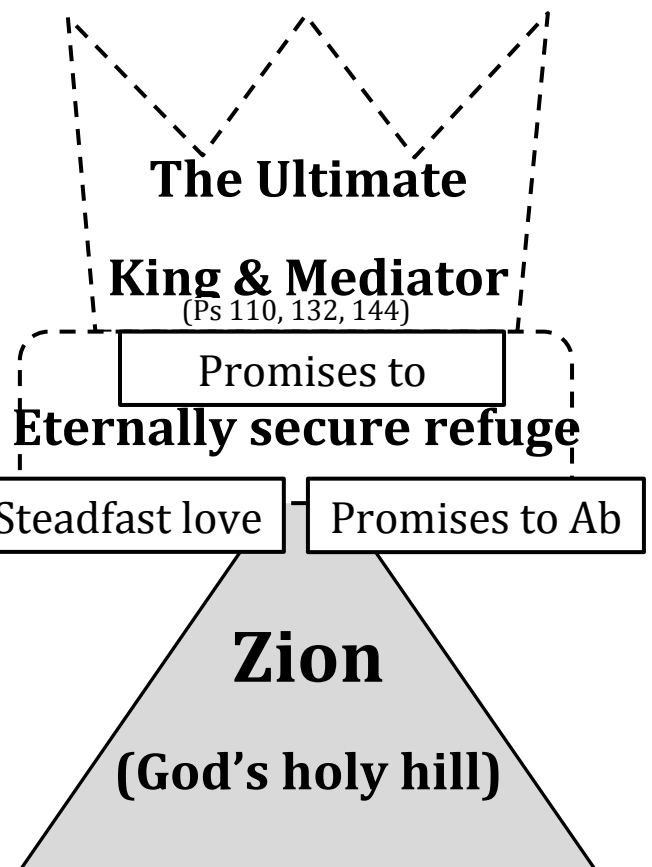
**Psalm 72:** The global king who will bring the blessing of Abraham to the nations (Gal 3.8, 29)

**Psalm 110:** The king greater than David (Mark 12.35-37, Heb 1.13, Acts 2.34-35)

**Psalm 110:** The eternal priest-mediator (Heb 7.23-27)

**Psalm 118:** The rejected stone who becomes the cornerstone (Mark 11.9, 12.10)

**Psalm 132:** The Son of David who will reign on David’s throne forever (Luke 1.32-33)



**Discuss:** How has our journey through the Psalms expanded your view of Jesus? (Whether something new, something old you’d stopped appreciating, something familiar you’ve more deeply grasped etc.,)

In what different ways has God shown how valuable Jesus is? How has God shown us how great Jesus is?

How does knowing all this about Jesus help us respond to him with total devotion & obedience? How does it help us to trust him in all situations?

And so one day Exile from Zion will be over

**Psalm 107:** Return from exile, pictured as rescue from:

4-7:

10-14:

17-20:

23-29:

But the journey is not yet done

**Psalms 120-134:** The Songs of Ascent – for the journey to Zion!

Zion:                      God dwells (122.1, 132.13)      a king rules on David's throne (122.5, 132.17)  
                                 stands firm forever (125.1)      blessing comes (128.1-5, 134.3)

The journey:    surrounded by the ungodly (120.2-7)                      facing contempt & scorn (123.3-4)  
                                 opposition to God's people (124.3, 129.5)                      struggle with sin (130.3-4)

**Psalm 137:** The experience of Exile – life away from home

In tears & torment (1-3), make Zion your greatest joy (4-6)

**Psalm 119:**    Remember Psalm 1? So who **will** you listen to?

E.g. the path to purity (v9), the need of sojourners (v19)  
      the response to opposition (v23), the source of strength (v28)  
      the answer to temptation (v37), the place of comfort (v50)

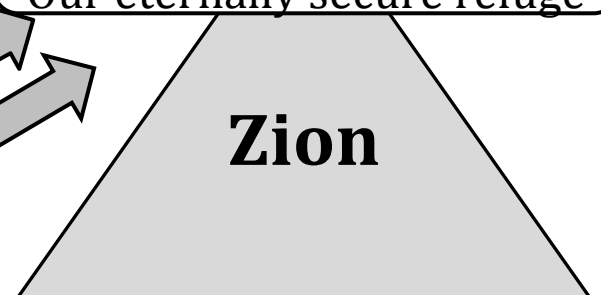
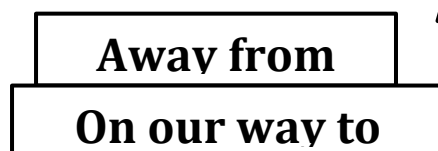
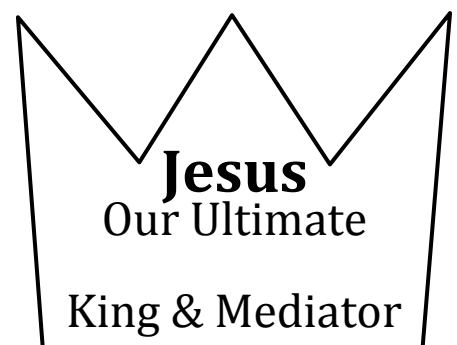
This is our journey: we are Exiles journeying to a new Zion

**Phil 3.20:** Citizens of another place, waiting to be called home

**1 Peter 1.1-4, 17, 2.11-12:** Exiles awaiting a heavenly inheritance

**Heb 11.13-16, 13.14:** strangers & exiles, awaiting the city to come

**Rev 14.1-5, 21.1-3:** waiting for Zion, the New Jerusalem



**Discuss:** How does it change your view of the Christian life to think of your situation as primarily 'away from home' and 'on a journey' somewhere else?

What difference would it make to your attitude, ambitions and priorities if you really had this outlook? What would it look like to 'make Zion your greatest joy'?

The response commanded:    'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever'

**Psalm 107.1-3, 8, 15, 21, 31**

[And in case we missed it – **Psalm 136, 146-150**]