

The Psalms

Waiting for the king

RML Overview weekend

13–14 February 2021

Session 1: Introduction and Book I

1. Introduction part 1: why we cannot ignore the Psalms

Discuss: in the verses below, who is speaking? Who are they speaking about?

What do these different verses have in common?

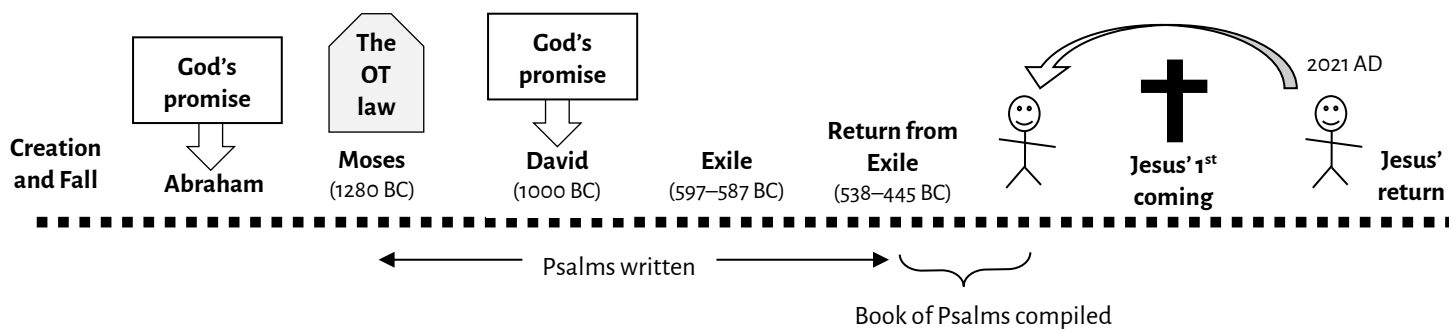
- Hebrews 1:5a; 1:8–9, 10–12, 13; 2:12;
- Acts 2:25–28, 34–36; 13:33, 35;
- John 2:16–17; 13:18; 15:25; 19:23–24, 28, 36;
- Mark 11:9; 12:6–11, 35–57;

[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. Introduction part 2: how we 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 our world is a mess

Psalm 1: "Who will you listen to?"

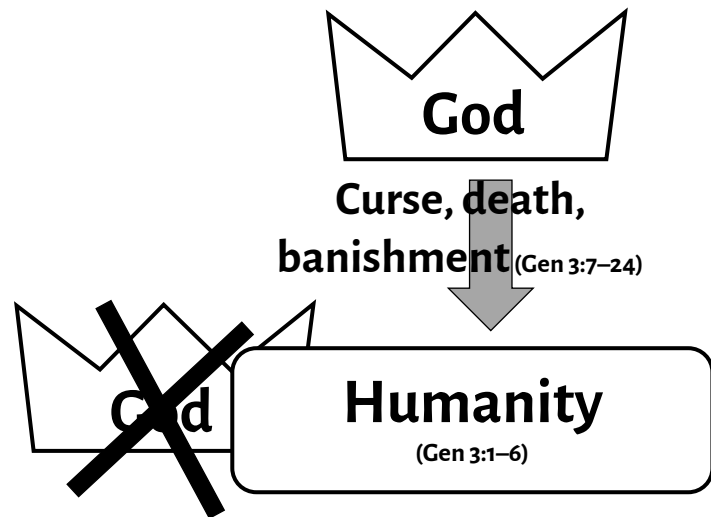
Discuss: What are the other main 'voices' around you in your particular situation?

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

And this has **always** been the issue (Gen 3:1–6)

And the cause of every other issue (Gen 3:7–24)

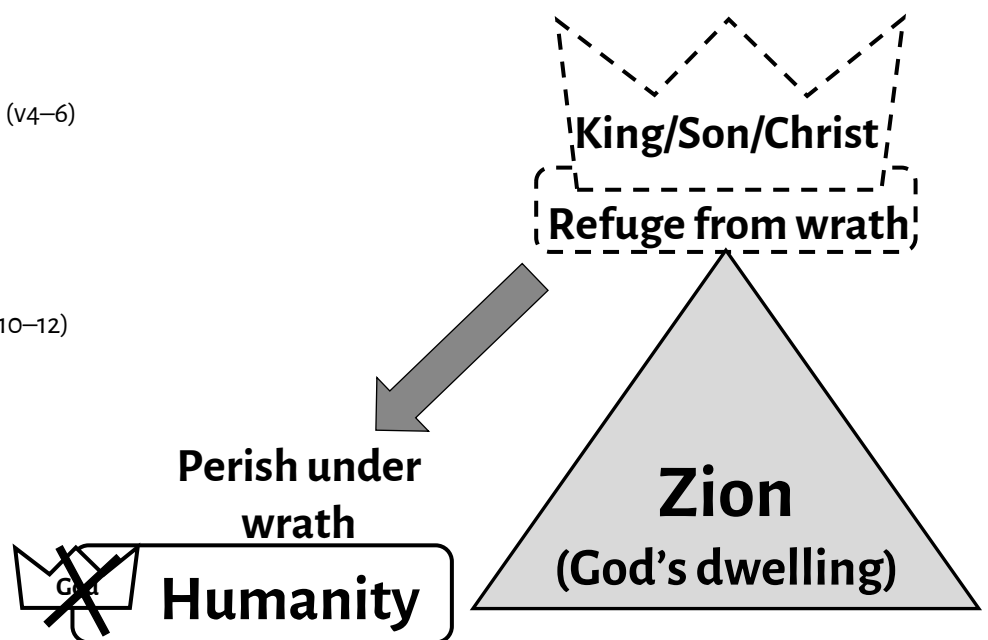
Psalm 2.1–3: so we live in a world in rebellion



4. The big Bible story part 2: a king will come to give refuge from wrath

Psalm 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 we usually think about the Christian message? How does it challenge or expand what we 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 rule creation to his glory (Gen 1:28–31)

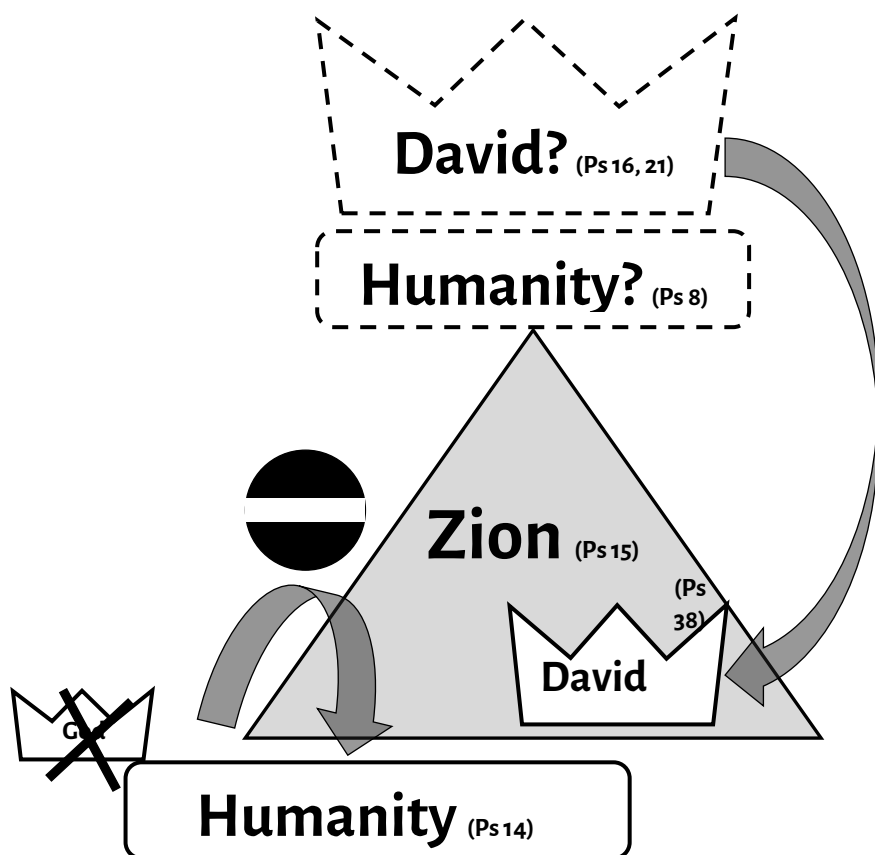
And one day that will happen again

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 (v10), in your presence! (v11)

Psalm 21: rule forever (v4), in glory & majesty (v5), in your presence (v6) – enjoying total victory (v8–12)

No, David himself needs rescue

Psalm 25: from enemies (v2), from sin (v6–7, 11)—depending on God's steadfast love (v6–7)

Psalm 38: wrath (v1), suffering (v3, 5–8), wicked opposition (v12, 19), distance from God (v21)

Session 2: Book II–III

Discuss: So far in the Psalms, what has God told us about:

- a) Zion?
- b) his king?

6. Book II: the story connects—this is **our** story too

Psalm 42–43: sometimes, life really sucks

Tears and mockery (42:3), downcast and 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 and rejection

You're the king who brings victory (v1–3)

And we trusted you for victory (v4–8)

But you've brought defeat, disaster and disgrace (v9–16)

...even though we're with you! (v17–22)

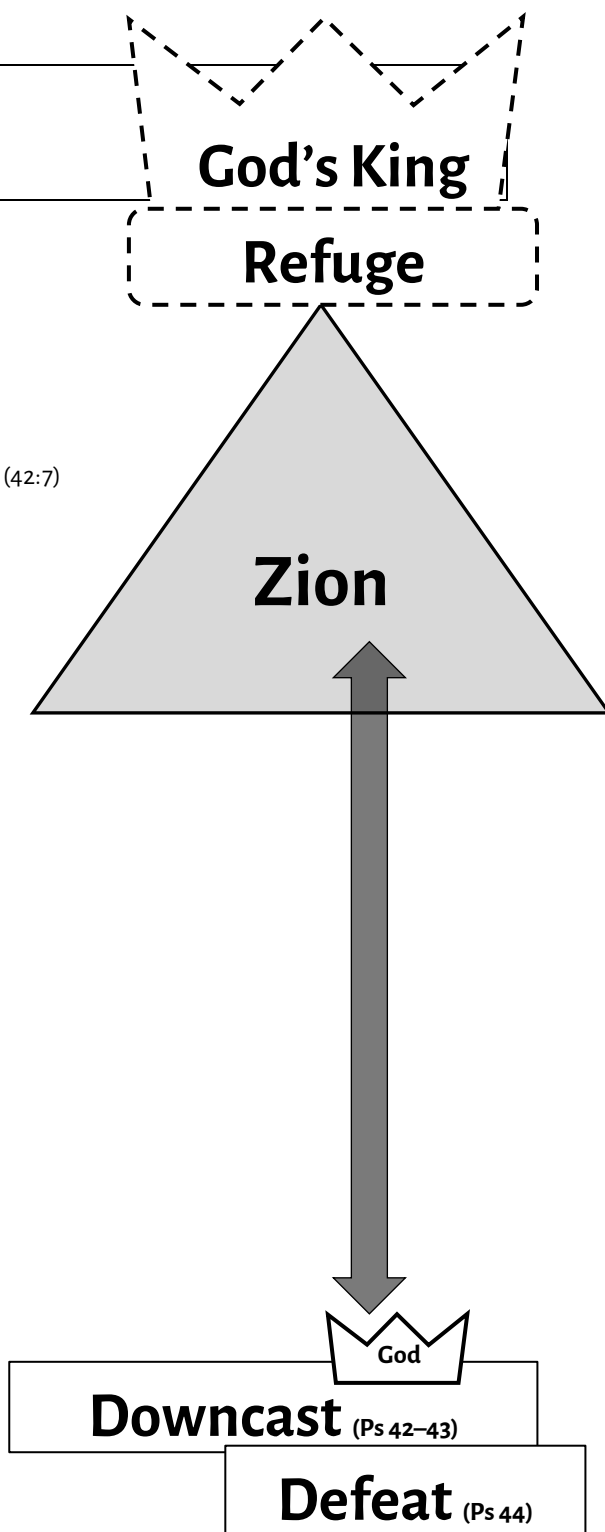
So we cry for rescue, depending on your steadfast love! (v23–26)

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: the ultimate king will bring a perfect Zion!

Psalm 45: But the ultimate king will come!

This king: Total goodness, total supremacy (v2–5)

Total divinity? (v6–8)

[Flash-forward—Heb 1:8–9: remember, this is our story too!]

His bride: **Giving** total devotion (v10–11)

Given total glory (v12–15)

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

How does knowing that relationship with Jesus is our eternal marriage impact how we view our current relationship situation (whatever that might be)?

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 (v1–3)

because God gives utter safety (v4–11)

Psalm 47: where God reigns victorious

for people from all nations (v9)

Psalm 48: where God makes himself known

in beauty (v1–2), in His protection (v3–8),

in his steadfast love (v9–14)

Discuss: What is so attractive about these pictures of Zion? In what ways are they better than where we live now?

How does this make us long for the true Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem of the world to come?

How might this impact our attitude to life in this world?

Psalm 50: but this will not be for the wicked

Psalm 51: and this even includes David (see 2 Samuel 11)

Psalm 53: in fact, this includes everyone

Rom 3:9–19—this is still our story
(even if we wish it wasn't)

8. Book II: the story hopes—could Solomon be the one?

Psalm 72: could Solomon be this king?

v1. He is:

v2–7. He will enjoy:

v8–11. His rule will be:

v12–14. He will bring:

v15–17. He will do this:

David had good reason to think so!

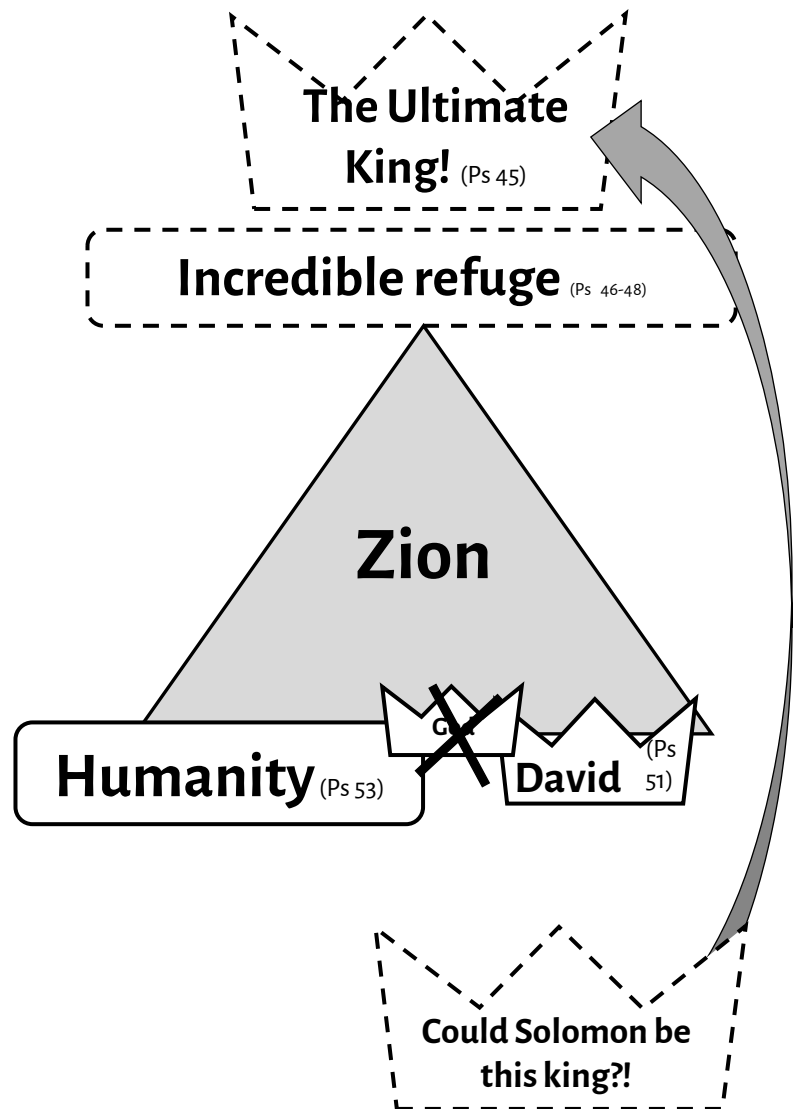
God's covenant with him (2 Sam 7)

- His son will rule (v12)
- His kingdom will last forever (v13, 16)
- His people will be blessed (v10)

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 2 Kings 24:18–25:26

Psalm 74: God's wrath (v1) against Israel (v2–3) has destroyed them (v4–8)

Psalm 79: Zion is defiled, Israel are dead (v1–4) because of God's anger (v5)

Psalm 89: God promised that David's throne would stand forever (v1–37)

But now, in wrath, he has rejected David's line and destroyed Zion (v38–51)

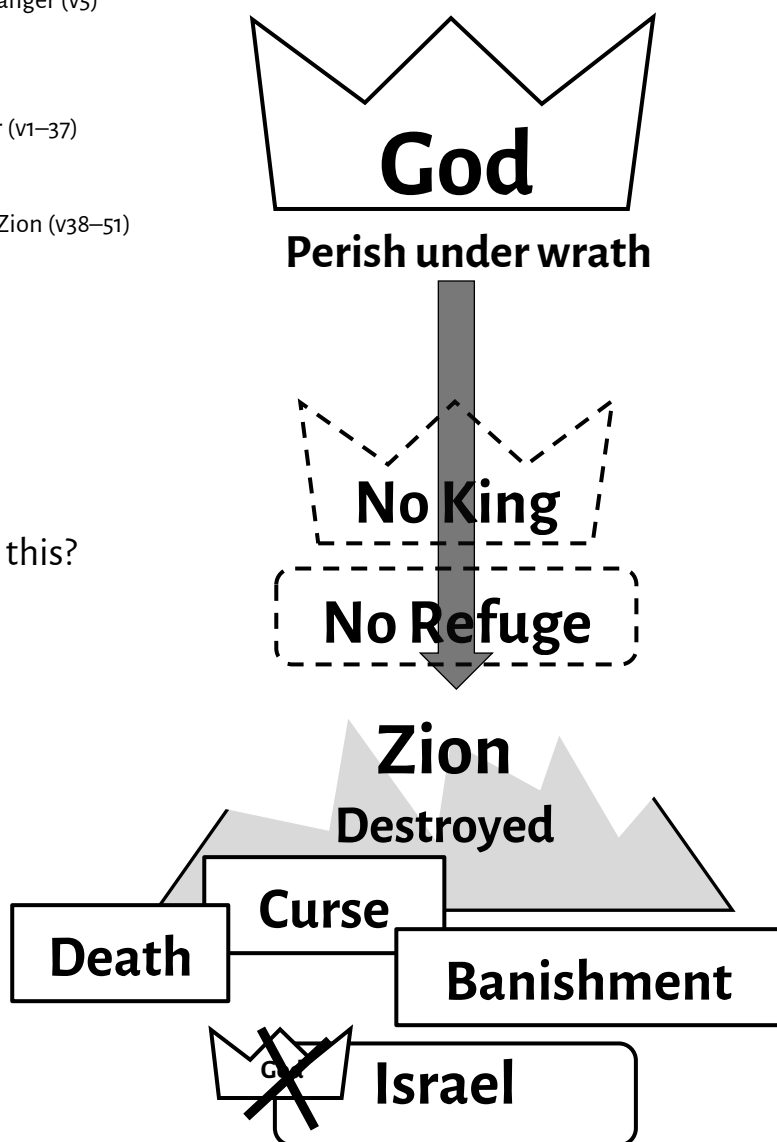
The question—why on earth has God done this?

Psalm 77: I am in great anguish (v1–3),

because it looks like it's all over (v4–9)

Psalm 80: You planted and grew our nation (v8–11),

so why then have you destroyed it? (v12–13?)



The answer—God’s covenant at Sinai depended on Israel’s obedience

Psalm 78: God gave Israel a law to obey (v5–8)

But Israel were persistently rebellious:

v9–11

v32, 36–37

v56–64

v17–20, 22

v40–42

despite all God’s kindness and warnings

v12–16

v33–35

v43–55

v21, 23–31

v38–39

v65–72

Psalm 81: when God rescued Israel, he gave them his law (v4–10)

But Israel would not listen (v11), so God gave them over to their own ways (v12)

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?

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

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

Session 3: using the Psalms in “quality time” with God

1. Using the Psalms to fuel “quality time” with God—part 1

Why should we use the Psalms in our own ‘quality times’ with God?

How should we use the Psalms in our own ‘quality times’ with God?

a. The Psalm

- Can I tell anything (easily) about the occasion? What’s happened/happening?
- Who is speaking? Who to?
- How are they feeling and why? Does the mood change?
- Any imagery or poetry that jumps out? What makes it powerful?
- How do parallel lines develop key ideas?
- What are the main things this Psalm says about God and/or what he’s done?

b. The Psalm and the Bible story

- Are any big bible events in view? What is said about them?
- What changes must I remember between then and now? What is different, and what is the same?
 - [temple, covenant, land, priesthood, sacrifices, king David, people of Israel etc]
- How does this Psalm anticipate Jesus’ first and/or second coming?
 - Is it sung...by/about/because of/need/waiting for/made possible by...Jesus?
 - Does it show me the problem of sin, curse, and God’s anger?
 - Does it point me to the solution to these in Jesus, what he has done, and/or will do?

2. Give it a go—in groups

Suggested Psalms:

3. Using the Psalms to fuel “quality time” with God—part 2

c. The Psalm and me and God

What is God saying to me through this Psalm?

- Is he making a promise? Giving a rebuke or comfort? Reminding me who he is? Or what he's done?
 - What's he saying to me about Jesus? How is he showing my need of Jesus?
 - Is God calling me to live a certain way? Helping me pray a certain thing?

What are some things I can say to him in response?

- What do I love or find difficult? What can I give thanks for? What don't I understand?
 - What do I want help to remember? What can I praise him for? What can I say sorry for?

4. Give it a go—by yourself

- Pick a Psalm, any Psalm...(maybe a short(er) Psalm)

5. Share it with someone else

- Chose one thing from the Psalm to share—it can be anything:
 - something you've loved, something you don't understand, an image you enjoyed etc.,

Session 4: Books IV and V

10. Book IV: the story looks back—the Exile is not **new**

Psalm 90: The problem of the Exile is the problem of Genesis 3

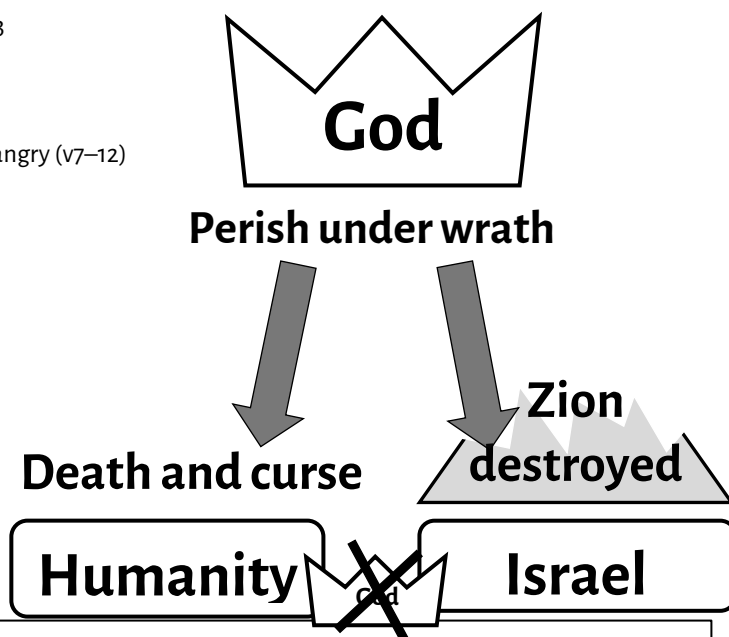
- God is eternal, but humanity is dust (v1–6)
- because humanity is rebellious and God is angry (v7–12)

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?

11. Book IV: The story looks back—the Exile is therefore not **hopeless**

1. **Psalm 103:** ...because God's **steadfast love** is the answer to human sin

(Of course! Remember 25:6–7, 44:26, 48:9, 51:1)

Cry for pity and 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 and fade like grass (90:3, 5)

⇒ but God knows and has compassion (103:13–15)

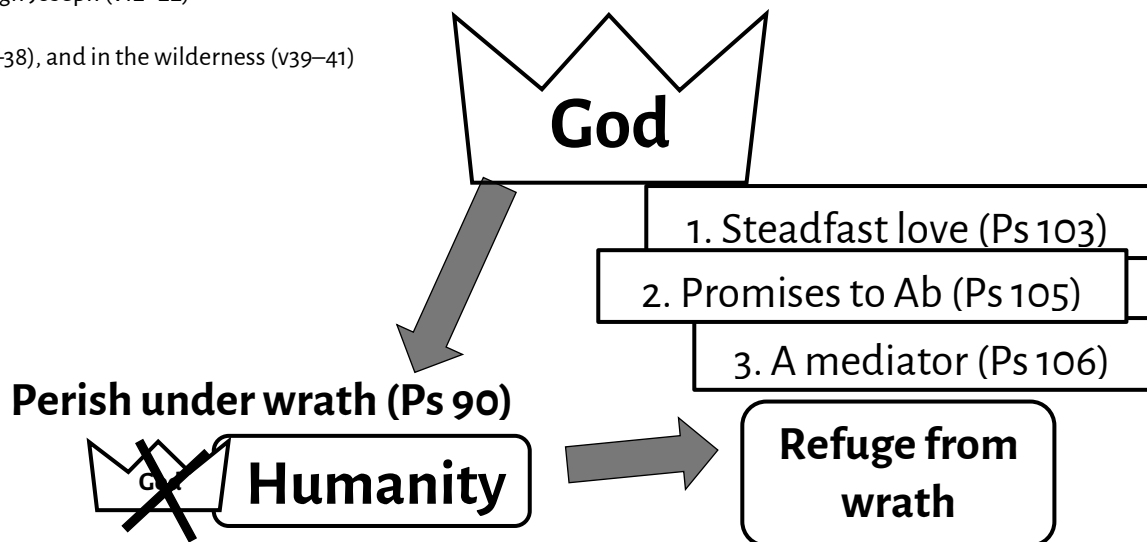
2. **Psalm 105:** ...because God has not abandoned his covenant with Abraham

He has been faithful to his promise to Abraham

to give the Promised Land (v7–11, v42–45)

As he rescued Israel through Joseph (v12–22)

from Egypt (v23–38), and in the wilderness (v39–41)



3. **Psalm 106:** ...because it is in God's nature to show mercy to rebels

His love endures forever! (v1–5)

At the Red Sea (v6–12; Ex 14–15):

they sinned—**yet he saved them**

In the wilderness (v13–23; Num 16, Ex 32):

they sinned; he judged—**yet he saved them** (through a mediator!)

In the wilderness (v24–33; Num 13–14, 25):

they sinned; he judged—**yet he saved them** (by another mediator!)

In the Promised Land (v34–46):

they sinned; he judged—**yet he saved them**

So again, now, save us, O LORD (v47)

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 (v1)

Who will reign from Zion (v2–3)

He will be an eternal priest-mediator (v4)
(Gen 14:18–20)

And totally victorious (v5–7)

Psalm 118: The rejected stone will be the cornerstone (v22)

Bringing blessing from Zion (v26)

Psalm 132: God’s promise to David still stands (v11)

When the obedient one comes (v12)

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)

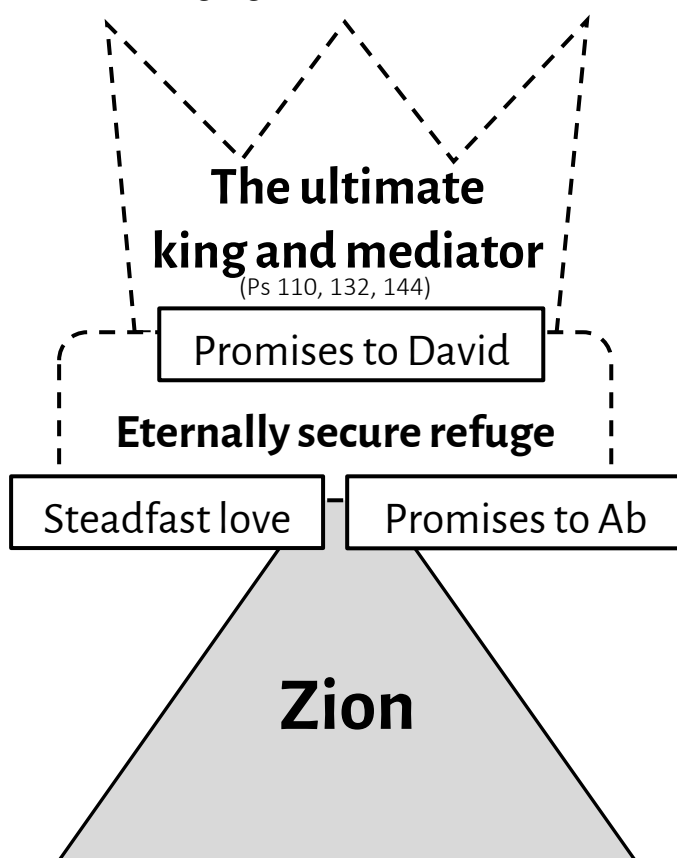
Psalm 72: the global king who brings blessing to the nations (Gal 3:8, 29)

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 and obedience? How does it help us to trust him in all situations?

And so one day the Exile from Zion will be over

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

v4–7

v10–14

v17–20

v23–29

But though the king has come, 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 and 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 and torment (v1–3), make Zion your greatest joy (v4–6)

But God has given everything we need for the journey

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

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)

Discuss: How should seeing the dangers/threats/challenges of the journey, and the provision the Scriptures give, impact our attitude to listening to God in his word?

What do you need to do (big or small things) to ensure that you are constantly listening to what God says in the Bible?

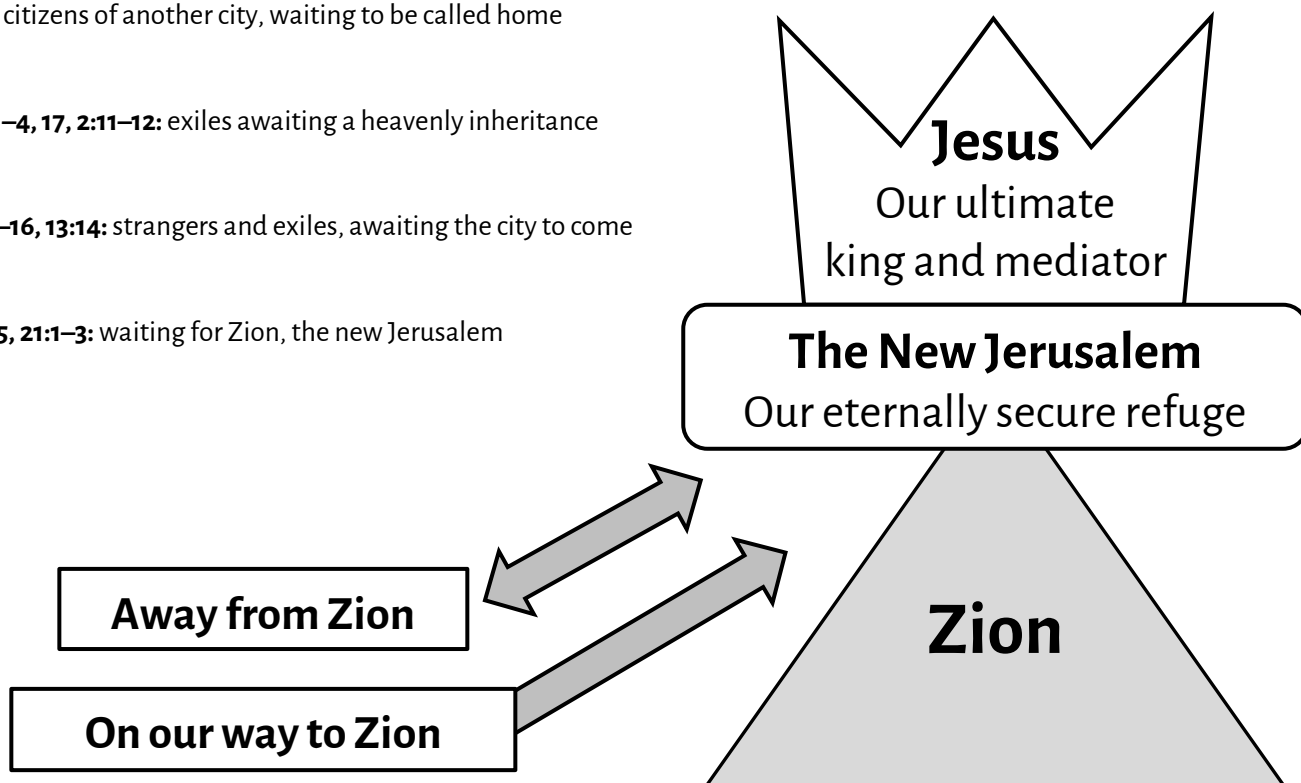
This is our journey: we are exiles journeying to a new Zion

Phil 3:20: citizens of another city, 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 and 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 life 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'? What have we seen in the Psalms to make us love our true, heavenly Zion more?

The response commanded

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

Psalms 107:1–3, v8, v15, v21, v31

[And in case we missed it—**Psalms 136, 146–150**]

Discuss: What do you want to give thanks for or praise God for from the Psalms?

How have they expanded your understanding of God, his Son, the future, and the Christian life?