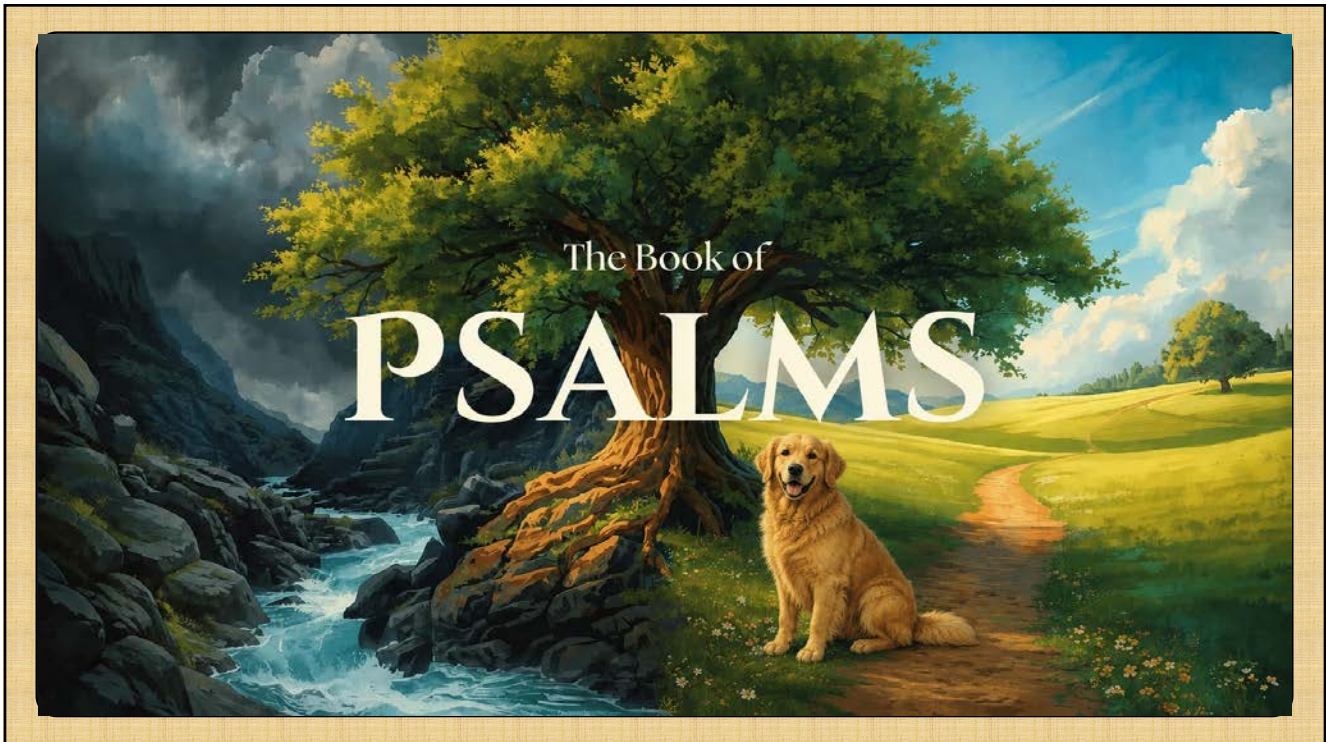




1

Table of Contents

- Short Review
- Psalms 1 and 2
- Book I: Overview (Psalms 1 – 41)
- Psalm 8
- Psalm 22
- Psalm 23

2

Short Review

- The Book of Psalms is an ancient collection of Hebrew poems, prayers, and hymns designed to teach God's people how to pray and worship.
- The psalms are an integral part of the Catholic Liturgy, helping the faithful to reflect and meditate upon the first reading.
- Priests, deacons, religious, and many of the lay faithful pray the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office).

3

Short Review

- King David is the primary author of the psalms, writing nearly half of the entire collection (73 psalms).
- Roughly one-third of the 150 psalms do not list an author in their titles.
- The psalms were written over a span of 1,000 years, stretching roughly from the 15th century to the post-exilic period in the 5th to 3rd centuries B.C.

4

Short Review

- As **poetry**, the psalms do not use rhyming sounds but rather use vivid imagery that repeat and build ideas through parallelism (i.e., two or more lines related to each other and complete a single thought).
- As **prayers**, the psalms express raw emotion – grief, joy, anger, and praise – in speaking true feelings to God.
- As **prophecy**, the psalms speak of Christ before Christ, foretelling the life, suffering, death, and reign of Jesus Christ centuries before His birth.

5

Short Review

- God grows His family through covenants – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus Christ. The psalms, for their part, are most closely associated with King David.
- As the Torah was to the Mosaic Covenant, so the psalms are to the Davidic Covenant. For Moses, Mount Sinai, and the 10 Commandments are central. For David, Mount Zion and the psalms are central.
- The psalms find their fulfillment in the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. He is the **key** unlocking the beauty of the psalms.

6

Short Review

- The Book of Psalms is arranged into five books to mirror the five books of the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
- An ancient rabbinic tradition notes that “Moses gave Israel five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel five books of the psalms.”
- Each of the five books concludes with a specific liturgical doxology or a final verse of praise (such as Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106, and 150).

7

Short Review

Book	Explanation
Book I	Introduction and Laments of David (Ps 1-41)
Book II	The Rise of the Davidic Kingdom (Ps 42-72)
Book III	Fall of the Davidic Kingdom (Ps 73-89)
Book IV	Reflections on the Fall of the Kingdom and Exile (Ps 90-106)
Book V	Rejoicing and Restoration of the Temple (Ps 107-150)

8

Introduction

- **Book I** (Psalms 1 – 41): Dominated by individual laments, both individual and communal, focus heavily on trust in God amid human struggles and opposition.
- Most of the psalms in Book I are attributed to King David, where he or other speakers cry out from deep personal turmoil, sickness, or persecution by enemies, yet consistently pivot back to deep personal trust in God.
- Historically, the psalms in Book I map onto biographical events in 1 and 2 Samuel, detailed periods of flight (e.g., from Saul), betrayal by close friends, and triumphant deliverance.

9

Introduction

- The first two psalms are purposely placed at the beginning of the Psalter to introduce the Psalter as a whole. They shape our reading of the entire Psalter.
- Psalms 1 and 2 serve as a unified, intentional doorway and introduction to the entire Psalter.
- The word “happy” or “blessed” (*ashray*) is at the start of Psalm 1 and the end of Psalm 2.
- Both mention “the way” (*derek*) and use the word *hagah* (meditating in Psalm 1, plotting/muttering in Psalm 2).

10

Introduction



Psalm 1

- Wisdom Introduction
- Meditation on God's Law



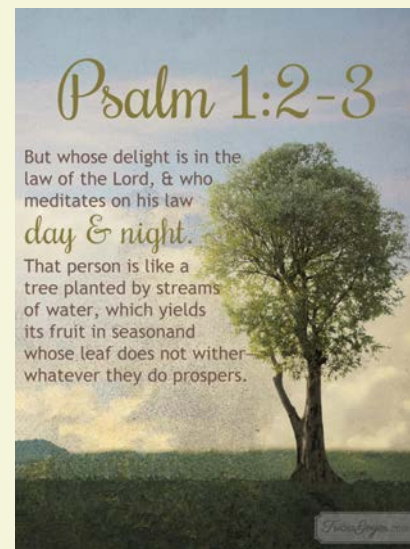
Psalm 2

- Royal Introduction
- Meditation on Son of David

11

Psalm 1

- Psalm 1 is the wisdom introduction to the Psalter. One of the motifs of the wisdom literature is the way of life versus the way of folly.
- The path of the righteous follows God (they meditate on God's law and are offered blessing), whereas the path of the wicked rejects God and will end in ruin.



12

Psalm 1

- In Psalm 1, we are presented with vivid imagery right away. The righteous are compared to a tree planted near streams of water, yielding fruit in due season, and leaves that do not wither.
- In contrast, the wicked are like chaff driven by the wind. They will not be able to survive God's judgment and remain among God's people.
- **Key:** Notice the foolish person's progression in verse 1: walk, stand, and sit with sinners. The person gradually becomes more comfortable with the wicked – walks, then stands, and then sits.



13

Psalm 1

- Psalm 1 connects the person who walks in the way of life with the tree of life in Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis (Gn. 2:9-10).
- **Key:** Pondering God's law will take you back to the state of peace and happiness our first parents enjoyed with God (50).
- Pondering God's law leads to life and prosperity (50).



14

Psalm 1

- Psalm 1 connects the Psalter with the wisdom literature and learning the way of wisdom.
- We will learn wisdom through the prayers and songs of King David who goes through every human emotion from the heights of exaltation to the depths of despair. In short, we *journey with King David* and his relationship with the Lord in reading through the psalms.



15

Psalm 1

- In the movie *Karate Kid*, Daniel had to learn technique: **wax on, wax off; paint the fence; sand the floor.**
- Daniel learned the fundamentals of martial arts, not through a book. In the psalms (especially Psalms 1 and 2), we learn the fundamentals of engaging in spiritual battle for God.
- The psalms aim to guide us into relationship with God. They guide us in that relationship with Him at every moment in whatever mood or situation we find ourselves – whether happy or sad, whether success or defeat (51).



16

Psalm 2

- Psalm 2 is very different from Psalm 1. Whereas Psalm 1 focuses on God's law, Psalm 2 is on God's Son, the King.
- Psalm 2 is a royal psalm that describes the foolish rebellion of earthly nations against God and His chosen King, culminating in a call for all rulers to surrender or face judgment.
- The basic idea of Psalm 2 is that God promises kingship over the world to the Son of David, and in the New Testament, God fulfills that promise in Jesus Christ.

17

Psalm 2

- St. John tells us that the "Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14).
- In the person of Jesus Christ, we meditate on God's Word *and* God's Anointed One, the Messianic Son of David, thereby fulfilling Psalms 1 and 2.
- In short, the way to blessing, the way to sharing in the Son's Kingship, is to take refuge in Jesus.



18

Psalm 2

- The first verse of Psalm 1 and the last verse of Psalm 2 form an *inclusio*, which is a literary framing device where an author places similar words, phrases, or themes at both the beginning and the end of the text. Everything in between the start and end points forms a single, unified unit of thought.

Psalm 1	Psalm 2
V. 1: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...	V. 11: Blessed are all who take refuge in him!

- In this case, the person who meditates on God's Word (Psalm 1), and meditates on the Messianic Son of David (Psalm 2), is truly **bles**sed.

19

Psalm 2

- VV. 1– 3**: Earthly kings and rulers conspire together against God and His Anointed One (the Messiah), trying to break free from His authority.
- VV. 4 – 6**: God does not panic; instead, He laughs at their futile plans from heaven and announces that He has firmly established His chosen King on Zion, His holy mountain.



20

Psalm 2

- **VV. 7 – 9**: The King declares God's covenant, proclaiming himself as God's Son and receiving the promise that the nations will be given to him as an inheritance to rule with ultimate authority.
- **VV. 10 – 12**: The psalm ends with practical advice for world leaders: serve the Lord with fear, "kiss the son," and find ultimate blessing in Him rather than facing His wrath.



21

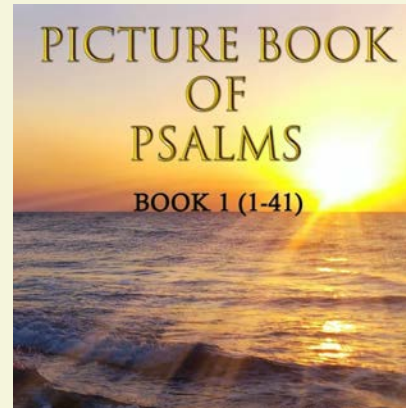
Psalm 2

- Psalm 2 is one of the most frequently quoted and alluded to Old Testament passages in the New Testament. Psalm 2's royal and messianic prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- Psalm 2:7 declares Jesus' unique identity as the Son of God and Messiah at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration.
- The apostles quote Psalm 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-26, seeing Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel conspiring against Jesus as a direct fulfillment of the nations conspiring against God and His Anointed One.

22

Book I: Overview

- In **Book I** (Psalms 1 - 41), three things appear repeatedly – sin, sickness, and enemies (Saul).
- David is being attacked by his enemies. He repents of his sins and asks God to deliver him.
- A dominant thread is unwavering dependence on God, leaning on divine strength rather than human or military might.



23

Book I: Overview

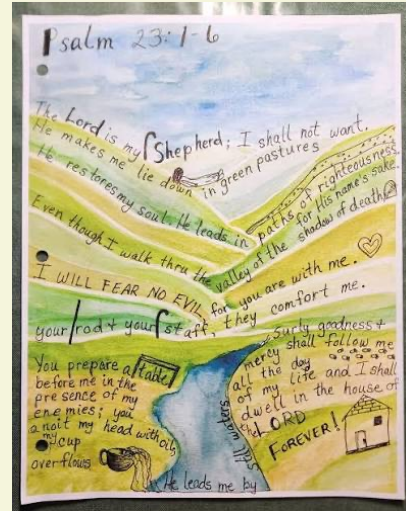
- David opens Psalm 3 by saying, "*How many are my foes, Lord! How many rise against me!*" (v. 2).
- In Psalm 41, we see David still crying out to the Lord, "*My enemies say bad things against me: 'When will he die and his name be forgotten?'*" (v. 5).
- **Key:** David is troubled in Book I.



24

Psalms 8, 22, and 23

- In addition to looking at Psalms 1 and 2 in Book I, we will look at Psalms 8, 22, and 23.
- These are classic passages written by King David that explore God's majesty in creation (Psalm 8), prophetic suffering (Psalm 22), and intimate pastoral care (Psalm 23).



25

Psalms 8

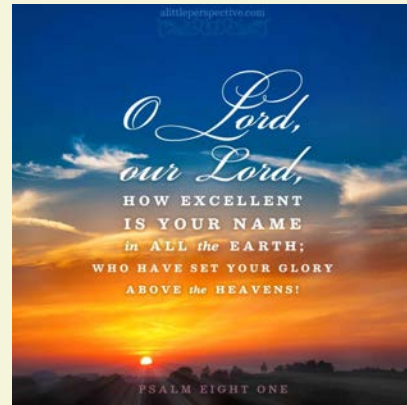
- A hymn of praise written by King David that marvels at God's majestic creation and the high value that God places on human beings.
- We can imagine David composing this psalm while tending his sheep on a starry night, gazing at the sky and pondering humanity's place in the universe (62).
- **Key:** The psalm invites all people to praise God, even infants and children!



26

Psalm 8

- **Verses 1–2:** The psalm begins and ends with the famous declaration: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"
- Psalm 8 is a good example of using the literary device of *inclusio*. Everything discussed in between – from the praise of infants to the moon, stars, and humans is a declaration of God's universal majesty.



27

Psalm 8

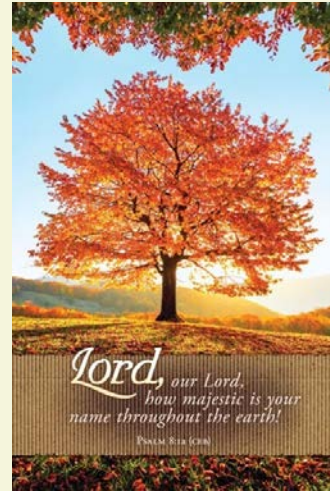
- **Verses 3–4:** When looking up at the vast moon and stars, David feels small and asks a profound question: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them?" Given the size of the universe, it is stunning that God cares for people at all.
- **Verses 5–8:** God answers that question by giving humans a special, exalted place. People are made just slightly lower than heavenly beings and are given charge, or dominion, over the rest of the earth's creation (animals, birds, and sea life).



28

Psalm 8

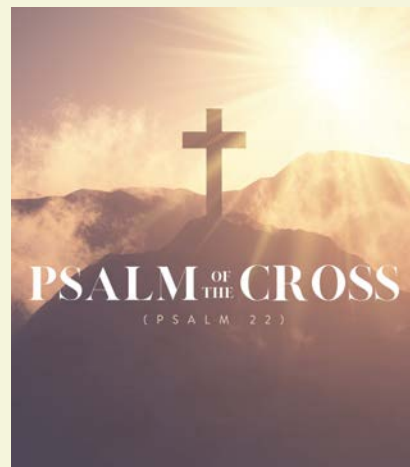
- In Psalm 8, we see that the natural world reflects the immense power and glory of the Creator.
- We also see that despite human frailty and smallness compared to the cosmos, God gives people dignity, honor, and responsibility.
- **Key:** God's greatness is reflected in the dignity that He gives humans.



29

Psalm 22

- Psalm 22 moves from a deep cry of suffering and abandonment to a triumphant declaration of praise and global deliverance.
- In ancient Jewish tradition, quoting the first line often meant invoking the *entire poem and its broader themes*.
- It is a shorthand way of bringing the listener's mind to the entire text, including how the psalm ends.



30

Psalm 22

- By quoting “O say can you see,” Americans know this is the famous opening line of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem of the United States.
- Our national anthem symbolizes national resilience, freedom, and unity. Core values like bravery, perseverance, and freedom are honored every time the song is performed.



31

Psalm 22

Verses 1 - 21

The speaker describes the extreme physical and emotional pain, feeling mocked and isolated, and surrounded by hostile enemies. Despite the feeling of abandonment, the psalmist remembers God's past faithfulness and begs for immediate help.

Verses 22 - 31

Right in the middle of verse 21, the tone shifts abruptly from despair to profound relief and joy. The speaker realizes God has heard his cry and rescued him. The second half becomes a song of public thanksgiving, predicting that all the nations and future generations will turn to worship God because of this deliverance.

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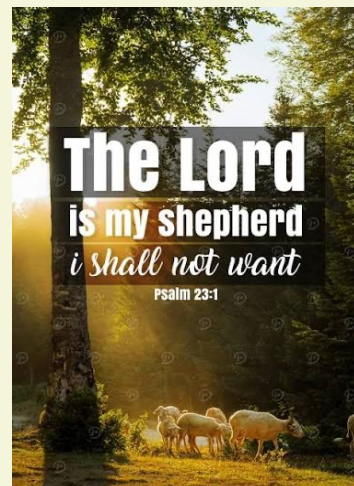
Psalm 22

Psalm Verses	Christ Fulfills
v. 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?	Jesus quotes the opening line on the Cross
v. 16: They pierce my hands and my feet	Accurately mirrors the method of Jesus' crucifixion
v. 18: They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment	Roman soldiers divided Jesus' garments and cast lots for his tunic.
vv. 7-8: Mockery and wagging heads	Onlookers mocked Jesus
vv. 22-31: Transition from suffering to triumph	The psalm's transition mirrors the trajectory of Christ's death on the cross to the Resurrection and spread of the Gospel.

33

Psalm 23

- The famous biblical poem by King David that portrays God as a caring shepherd who provides, protects, and guides His people through every season of life.
- Psalm 23 could be called the "Pearl of the Psalms" and features some of the most cherished verses and reflections in Sacred Scripture. It is the pinnacle of piety and poetry.



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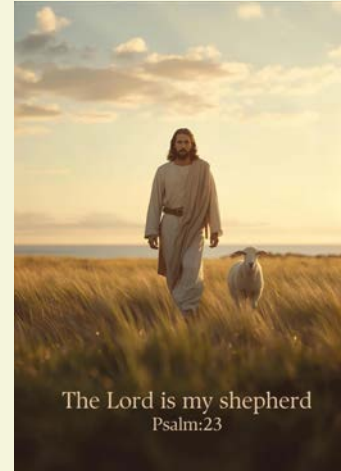
Psalm 23

- Three possible readings of Psalm 23:

The average believer to the God of Israel

The words of the Messiah to God the Father – the shadow of death is the Sacred Triduum

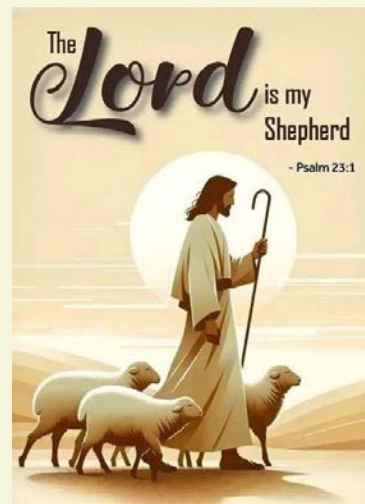
Our prayer to Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd



35

Psalm 23

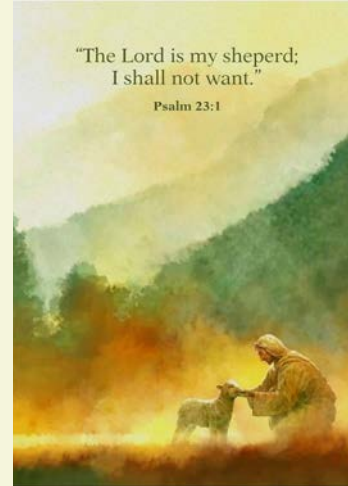
- **Verse 1:** God cares for believers like a shepherd cares for his sheep, meaning that they will not lack anything that they truly need.
- **Verse 2:** God offers physical and spiritual rest, leading people to peaceful and nourishing places.
- **Verse 3:** God heals emotional weariness and guides people to do what is right.



36

Psalm 23

- **Verse 4:** Believers do not need to fear danger or death because God is present to protect and comfort.
- **Verse 5:** God acts as a generous host, offering abundance and honor even in the presence of enemies.
- **Verse 6:** The psalm ends with complete trust that God's love will last throughout life and into eternity.



37

Psalm 23

Sacraments

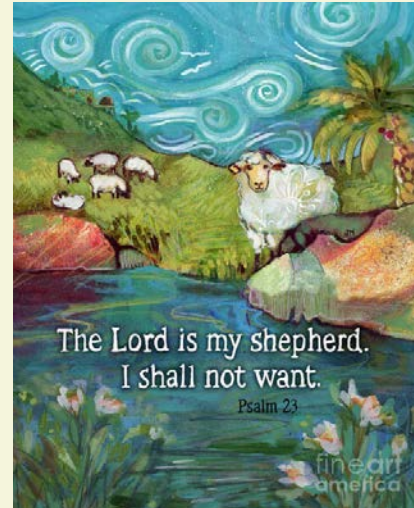
Still waters (Baptism)	The "waters of refreshment" represent the cleansing and renewing waters of baptism.
Prepared table (Eucharist)	Prefigures the holy altar and the feast of the Eucharist, where Christ offers His Body and Blood
Head anointed with oil (Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick)	Christ offers strength and healing for His disciples
Cup and dwelling in the house of the Lord	Points to eternal communion with God and the grace of sustaining life's journey.

38

Psalm 23

- **St. Ambrose:** Describing the newly baptized approaching the altar in their white robes, he writes:

The cleansed people, rich with these adornments, hasten to the altar of Christ, and sing the psalm of David: 'You have prepared a table in my sight... You have anointed my head with oil, and Your inebriating cup, how excellent it is!' (Myst. VIII, 43)



39

Summary

- Book I (Psalms 1 – 41) of the Psalter focuses on the personal experiences, struggles, and kingship of David.
- A large portion of Book I consists of individual laments where David cries out to God while facing intense pressure, betrayal, or military opposition from enemies.



40

Summary

David's Example – How to Handle Hardships

David doesn't give in to despair or give up on God.

David calls to mind times in the past when God worked salvation for him.

David verbally states his confidence in God's saving power – he makes acts of faith.

David confesses his sin to God so God can forgive it and withdraw punishment.

David promises to praise God after God saves him, sometimes praising God in advance, before God has acted.

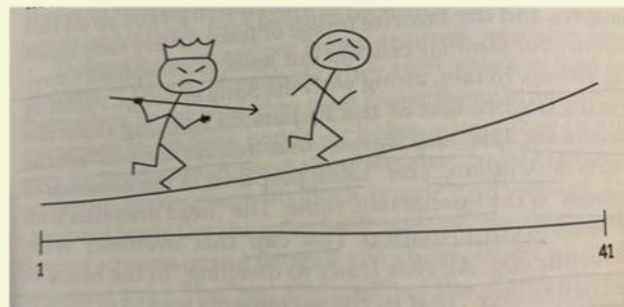
Key: Book I is not a book of depression, but a book of faith. David's sufferings foreshadow Jesus, the Son of David.

~Page 58

41

Summary

- The dominant theme of Book I (Psalm 1 – 41) is David persecuted by his enemies.
- Despite being persecuted, David's focus remains on God as a secure stronghold and ultimate protector.



42

Summary

- Book I concludes at Psalm 41 with a formal doxology of praise (*"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen"*).
- A doxology marks the end of each of the five books of the Psalms.



43

Next Time

- We will look at the second book of the psalter – the rise of the Davidic Kingdom.
- **Book II**: Psalms 42 - 72
- Major rise in the Davidic Kingdom
- The tone is much more joyful
- The Zion Psalms – the glory of the sacred city of Jerusalem
- These psalms reflect King David not in his suffering, but in his royal majesty



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