COVENANT WORSHIP **Rev. Jules Grisham**

THE PSALMS **October 18, 2026**

Luke 24:44:
Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in **the Law of Moses** and **the Prophets** and **the Psalms** must be fulfilled."

I. STRUCTURE OF THE CLASS: OVERVIEW OF THE WHOLE

This is an introduction to biblical theology, the study of Scripture as an unfolding unity that has as its focal point throughout the whole of it the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will examine God's great work of redemption as it moves from creation to fall, then from redemption to consummation; from the garden of God to the city of God; and from promise to fulfillment through the long course of history as it presses on toward the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall return and the kingdom of the world shall have become the kingdom of God and of his Christ!

PART 1: The Pattern of the Whole – Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation (Weeks 1-3)

- *Week 1: The Unity of Scripture*
  One unfolding plan of redemption, whose focal point from beginning to end, is Christ.
- *Week 2: Creation, Fall, and the Promise of Seed (Genesis 1-3)*
  From the state of blessing to one of sin, misery for all, but with a promise of deliverance.
- *Week 3: The Seed Spreads (Genesis 4-50)*
  From blessing decreed to blessing indeed, inaugurated in a great promise sealed w/ a covenant.

PART 2: Covenant Promises and Principles (Weeks 4-10)

1. "THE LAW" (Luke 24:44)

- *Week 4: Covenant Redemption (Exodus 1-19)*
  The initial fulfillment of God's promise of redemption, a shadow of Christ's work to come.
- *Week 5: Covenant Law (Exodus 21ff., Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)*
  The principles of covenant faithfulness for the redeemed, revealing God's holiness and our need.
- *Week 6: Covenant Kingdom (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings)*
  The initial fulfillment of God's promise of king and kingdom, a shadow of Christ to come.

2. "THE PSALMS" (Luke 24:44)

- *Week 7: Covenant Worship (The Psalms)*
  The prayers and songs of praise, confession, petition thanksgiving, and lament of God's people.
- *Week 8: Covenant Wisdom (The Wisdom Books)*
  Whereas God's law sets boundaries, his wisdom gives us skill for living rightly and well.

3. "THE PROPHETS" (Luke 24:44)

- *Week 9: Covenant Judgment (The Prophets, Part 1)*
  God's indictment of Israel for its breach of covenant, w/ the promise of coming redemption.
- *Week 10: Covenant Love (The Prophets, Part 2)*
  Visions of the consummation of all things, a day of judgment and of glory, triumph & vindication.

PART 3: The Coming of the King and of His Kingdom (Weeks 11-14)

- *Week 11: Kingdom Come (The Gospels)*
  The coming of the King -- prophetic fulfillment, power, proclamation, death, and resurrection.

- *Week 12: Kingdom Advancing (Acts)*
  The expansion of the kingdom by the proclamation of the King by heralds of the good news.
- *Week 13: Kingdom Living (The Epistles)*
  The reality of Christ's present reign set and the principles of life as servants of the King set forth.
- *Week 14: Kingdom Coming (Revelation)*
  The consummation of all things – Christ's return in glory and the vindication of his people.

So we see that the order of our Old Testament is the Law, the Psalms, then the Prophets.
But Jesus put them in a different order in Luke 24:44. Why?

II. THE JEWISH ORDER OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES ("THE *TANAKH*")
Tanakh is an acronym (*Ta-Na-Kh*) formed from *Torah* (Law), *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (Writings)

1. *Torah* ("the Law")
Torah is a word that means "law, teaching, instruction," and it is the name given for the first five books of Scripture, the five books of Moses (also known as "the Pentateuch," from the Greek for "five scrolls"):

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

2. *Nevi'im* ("the Prophets")
The *Nevi'im* is a word that means "prophets," and it is the name given for the second section of Scripture consisting of 8 books. The *Nevi'im* are divided into two main sections, the Former Prophets (4 books; the historical narratives that take us from the Conquest through to the fall of the Kingdom and to the 37th year of the exile, i.e., 856 years) and Latter Prophets (4 books; the ones we think of as properly the Prophets), which are in turn subdivided into the 3 Major and 1 Minor Prophets (our 12 books of the Minor Prophets, also known as "the Twelve," counted as 1 book):

The Former Prophets

6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Samuel (i.e., 1-2 Samuel, counted as 1 book)
9. Kings (i.e., 1-2 Kings, counted as 1 book)

The Latter ("Major") Prophets

10. Isaiah
11. Jeremiah
12. Ezekiel

The Latter ("Minor") Prophets

13. "The Twelve" (i.e., our 12 books of the Minor Prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – counted as 1 book)

3. *Ketuvim* ("the Writings")
The *Ketuvim* is a word that means "writings," and it is the name given for the third section of Scripture consisting of 11 books. **Since the Psalms is the first of these in order, the entire section was also**

sometimes referred to as "the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). The *Ketuvim* begin with 8 books of poetry and wisdom literature, of which 5 of these were grouped together into a cluster called "the *Megillot*" (i.e., "the five scrolls"); and end with 3 final historical books, taking us to about 430BC, at which time there is an extended prophetic silence until the voice of prophesy returns to Israel with John the Baptist.

14. **Psalms**
15. Proverbs
16. Job
17. Song of Songs (1st of the *Megillot*)
18. Ruth (2nd of the *Megillot*)
19. Lamentations (3rd of the *Megillot*)
20. Ecclesiastes (4th of the *Megillot*)
21. Esther (5th of the *Megillot*)
22. Daniel
23. Ezra-Nehemiah (counted as 1 book)
24. Chronicles (i.e., 1-2 Chronicles, counted as 1 book)

Thus, the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Old Testament are the same in content, but differ both in the way they are counted (24 books in the former vs. 39 in the latter) and in the way they are ordered.

Last Verse of the Old Testament (Jewish order):
2 Chronicles 36:23:
"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

Last Verse of the Old Testament (LXX and Christian order):
Malachi 4:5-6:
Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

III. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THE PSALMS AND THEIR INCLUSION IN THE CANON:
In the overview of the course, this section is called Covenant Worship. The Psalms, consisting of prayers and songs of praise, confession, petition, thanksgiving, and lament, have served as the authorized Prayer and Hymn Book for both the private devotions and corporate worship of God's people for 3,000 years. Only in the Psalms do we enter so fully into the affective dimension of our life and experience with the LORD; only in the Psalms do we enter so fully into the internal emotional and devotional life of (mostly) David (but also other authors), into which emotional we ourselves enter when we read and pray and sing the Psalms. In this way, we join with God's people who have done the same for generation after generation, entering into, say, David's prayer world as the representative voice for our own, and into a context in which we are reminded of the holiness and faithfulness and goodness of the LORD, in whom alone is our refuge and hope.

In the Psalms, we are instructed, by repeated readings and by prayer and singing, in the holiness and goodness and faithfulness of God, and are trained in the language of prayer and praise, a sanctified language. "The language of Canaan."

For Reformed theologians and historical Puritans, “the language of Canaan” has served as a metaphor for the distinct, scriptural vocabulary and spiritual tone spoken by true believers. Rather than referring to a literal language like Hebrew, “the language of Canaan” represents a way of speaking that is deeply saturated with biblical metaphors, a consciousness of God's covenant, and a focus on eternal life.

Isaiah 19:18, 23-25:
In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak **the language of Canaan** and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts… In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

This notion that by reading and gradually internalizing Scripture, Christians come to speak “the language of Canaan,” making use of a common network of biblical symbols and expressions to explain and give meaning and direction to our daily lives, to understand the course of human history, and to discuss and contemplate the already and not yet reality of the Kingdom of God. This refers to a specific way of thinking and speaking that requires spiritual hearing and active immersion in the word.

And while this is effected by the attentive and ongoing reading of any Scripture, this is nowhere more the case than in the affective powers reached and developed and cultivated and unleashed when we read, pray, and sing the Psalms.

In doing this, moreover, we are connected to the life of God’s people through the ages. Just as one example, consider that in the Old Testament the burnt offering every morning and every evening was accompanied by the offering of incense on the golden altar, the smoke rising from which represented the prayers of God’s people (see Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4). Though the sacrifices are now gone because Christ our Passover Lamb has fulfilled and transformed the entire way we worship, even so, the morning and evening prayers never ceased. For centuries, the church offered up corporate prayer to the LORD every morning (6:00am) and every evening (3:00pm), the hours corresponding to the old burnt offerings. And in the Book of Common prayer, every morning, that prayer began with Psalm 95:

Psalm 95:1-11:

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
For forty years I loathed that generation and said,
"They are a people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways."
Therefore I swore in my wrath,
"They shall not enter my rest."

Every morning! Called, stirred up, reminded of who we are and who God is and who we're called to be and how we're called to live as his people. What a powerful daily reminder this is! And what a connection we experience with the generations who've gone before us, being instructed in this language of godliness, the language of Canaan! And how impoverished we are when we don't enter into these daily patterns of reminder and renewal and encouraging and equipping.

For all these reasons, I cannot recommend strongly enough the daily practice of reading and praying through the Psalms. It has been a transformative discipline for me that has enriched my spiritual life beyond measure.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE PSALTER AND AUTHORSHIP, HUMAN & DIVINE:
The 150 Psalms are organized into five collections, called "books." All sorts of theories have been proposed for how to categorized these collections (one of the most well-known being the idea that the five books of the Psalms reflect the theological themes and content of the five books of Moses). What we can affirm with the most certainty is that the five collections do each have a character and "flavor" of their own, as follows:

1. **Book One (Psalms 1-41)**: David is the stated author of 37 of these first **41 Psalms**. The only ones not ascribed to David as Psalms 1 and 2 (for both of which no author is named; together, these serve as the thematic, theological, and devotional introduction for the entire Psalter); Psalm 10 (which is actually just the second part of Psalm 9, and was originally combined with it); Psalm 33 (which is actually the second part of Psalm 32, such that it would have been originally part of it). In other words, this first "book" of the Psalms is basically written by David. More than anywhere else, this brings us into David's personal life – his fears, hurts, frustrations, hopes, joys, longings, praises. While all of the Psalms (the word "psalm" means a sacred song accompanied by a stringed instrument) can and ought to be sung in the context of corporate worship, this first collection is heavily focused on David's (and thus our) internal, individual prayer life in the context of our living as God's people in a fallen world.

2. **Book Two (Psalms 42-72)**: The majority (18) of the **31 Psalms** in the second collection are attributed to David, but there are other authors listed now as well:
    - Psalms 42-49 (by the Sons of Korah; Psalm 43 being originally one with Psalm 42)
    - Psalm 50 (by Asaph)
    - Psalms 51-65, 68-71 (by David; Psalm 71 being originally one with Psalm 70)
    - Psalm 72 (by Solomon; but the Psalm ending with "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended")
    - Thus, only Psalms 66 and 67 are anonymous

Book Two is similar to Book One, consisting of prayers and songs. If pressed to note a difference in style and tone, Book Two seems more directed to corporate worship ("us") than Book One, but this is just a generalization. It also incorporates the worldview of authors writing after David during the period of the monarchy.

3. **Book Three (Psalms 73-89)**: Of the **17 Psalms** in this third collection, only 1 is ascribed to David. All the rest are by the temple musicians, either Asaph or the Sons of Korah, as follows:
    - Psalms 73-83 (by Asaph)
    - Psalms 84-85, 87-89 (by the Sons of Korah; Psalm 88 being ascribed both to the Sons of Korah and to Heman the Ezrahite, and Psalm 89 being ascribed only to Ethan the Ezrahite, though it seems probable that Ethan would have been also associated with the Sons of Korah)
    - Psalm 86 (the only Psalm by David in Book Three)

    Book Three takes us further from David, deeper into the monarchy and more emphatically into an emphasis on the corporate worship of Israel, though the prayer dimension continues. One feature of this short, third collection of Psalms is that it discernably darkens in tone toward the end, as we can discern the approaching end of the monarchy.

4. **Book Four (Psalms 90-106)**: Of the **17 Psalms** in Book Four, only 2 are by David, 1 (the first) is by Moses, and 14 are anonymous:
    - Psalm 90 (by Moses)
    - Psalms 91-100; 102; and 104-106 (anonymous)
    - Psalms 101 and 103 (by David)

    By beginning with the Psalm of Moses, it's as if we see Israel looking back following the catastrophe of the fall of the kingdom to its deeper anchorage in the covenant promises and obligations that preceded the monarchy. This fourth collection is, except for the Psalm of Moses and 2 by David, anonymous, and its primary emphasis is on the corporate worship of God's people.

5. **Book Five (Psalms 107-150)**: There is a resurgence of Davidic authorship in this final collection, his having written 15 of the **44 Psalms** here, with another 1 by Solomon, and the rest being anonymous, as follows:
    - Psalms 108-110; 122; 124; 131; 133; and 138-145 (by David)
    - Psalm 127 (by Solomon)
    - Psalms 107; 111-121; 123; 125-126; 128-137; and 146-150 (anonymous)

    More than the other collections, Book Five feels like a collection of collections, leaning more and more into corporate worship emphasizing praise.
    - **The Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118)**. These 6 Psalms were sung at the feasts to remember and celebrate God's deliverance of the nation from Egypt, and indeed it was almost certainly Psalm 118 that was the hymn sung by the disciples at the conclusion of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:30).
    - **Psalm 119**: A huge, 176-verse acrostic poem celebrating the wisdom and perfection of God's word.

- **The Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134)**: These 15 Psalms were sung by pilgrims as they approached ("went up to") Jerusalem during the three annual pilgrimage feasts.
- **The Great Hallel (Psalm 120-136)**: Strictly speaking, the Great Hallel is Psalm 136, with its call and response structure (the response being, over and over again, "For his steadfast love endures forever"), but Jewish tradition expands it to include the Songs of Ascent through Psalm 136.
- **The Final Hallel (Psalms 146-150)**: The Psalter ends with an explosion of praise – five Psalms whose theme is calling God's people to praise the LORD ("Hallelujah!") for his goodness and greatness and faithfulness. The last verse of the Psalter is **Psalm 150:6**: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" (In Hebrew, "Hallelujah!")

To summarize, David, Israel's greatest king and the type of the Christ to come, is the stated author of roughly half of the Psalms (i.e., 73 of them, though there are probably several more for which his authorship is not formally attributed). He is thus the central figure associated with the Psalter. But as we've seen there are also 2 Psalms attributed to Solomon, 1 to Moses, and several to the temple musicians (including 12 by Asaph and 11-12 by the Sons of Korah). There are 49 anonymous Psalms, though as we've seen, several of these were originally combined with the Psalms that precede them.

But we have only spoken of human authorship. As in all of Scripture, God is the ultimate author. It is by his Spirit that all Scripture was inspired and written (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Therefore, it is interesting to meditate on this for a moment: in the Psalms we have the prayers and songs of David which were written to God, which God then gave back to us to serve as our own manual for prayer and praise and for training up in godliness and devotion, both individual and corporate. And it has continued as the authorized prayer and hymn book for God's people for 3,000 years! (My idea for a truly ecumenical Psalm sing, to include representatives from Ashkenazi Jewish, Sephardic Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Scottish Reformed, black American, and American evangelical traditions.)

V. THE PSALMS ARE MESSIANIC

There are certain Psalms that are undeniably Messianic through-and-through. These include Psalms 2, 45, and 110, for example.

Psalm 110:1-4:
A PSALM OF DAVID.
The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."
The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!
Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power, in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.
The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind,
"You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

But really, all the Psalms are Messianic! That is, all of them are given to us to reveal the person and character of Christ, and in him, the character of God's people (Christ's church) which we've been called to embrace and embody.

VI. A FOURFOLD READING OF THE PSALMS

1. David writes prayers and songs to God. We read the words in light of David's own context first.

2. But then we remember that God gives these prayers and praises of David back to us, his people, for use in our own prayer lives and worship. Thus, we read the words again, as it were, as the Old Testament saints who worshipped and waited for the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David and greater than David, who would bring to fruition all the promises of God.

3. Then we imagine the Christ, Messiah, coming from the back from among the assembly, walking forward, a man in our midst, and as he moves forward, we see that in his words and deeds, he is embodying and fulfilling these Psalms, in his very person! It's as if they are the blueprint for his character and teachings and actions. He is the Christ! Then he comes to the front and he, the one who alone lived the righteous life Adam and all we were called to live – the Holy One of Israel! – then offered himself a once for all sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile his people to God. Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world! And this Promised One, the Christ of God, who died, was then raised up and vindicated by God in the resurrection, and now sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. We read the Psalms then in light of how Jesus read and embraced them through the course of his earthly ministry, and embodied and fulfilled them in his life, death, resurrection, and reign!

4. Then finally, fourth and last reading: we join with the Old Testament saints and sing the same Psalms with our fellow New Testament saints, fulfilled now in Christ, in whom we take refuge while we still await his return and the consummation of all things.

VII. AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTRODUCTION TO THE THEOLOGY OF THE ENTIRE PSALTER (PS. 1-2)

PSALM 1

1:1 **Blessed** is ***the man***
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
1:2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
1:3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
1:4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
1:5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of ***the righteous***;
1:6 for the LORD knows the way of ***the righteous***,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

The two ways:
the way of blessing, life, righteousness
vs.
the way of the wicked, sinners, scoffers,
and their different outcomes.
A message of universal wisdom.
But also, *in itself*, a formula for despair!
Why? Because of the reality Ps 2 shows:
the tenaciousness of our rebellion,
and of our complicity with it…

PSALM 2

2:1	Why do <u>the nations</u> rage	The reality of opposition to the way,
	and <u>the peoples</u> plot in vain?	but God's victory by his Anointed One,
2:2	<u>The kings</u> of the earth set themselves,	the King to whom every knee will bow:
	and <u>the rulers</u> take counsel together,	and where the blessing is found for us!
	against the LORD and against ***his anointed***, saying,	
2:3	"Let us burst their bonds apart	
	and cast away their cords from us."	
2:4	He who sits in the heavens laughs;	
	the Lord holds them in derision.	
2:5	Then he will speak to them in his wrath,	
	and terrify them in his fury, saying,	
2:6	"As for me, I have set ***my King*** on **<u>Zion</u>**,	
	<u>my holy hill</u>."	
2:7	I will tell of the decree:	
	The LORD said to me, "You are ***my Son***;	
	today I have begotten you.	
2:8	Ask of me, and I will make <u>the nations</u> your heritage,	
	and the ends of the earth your possession.	
2:9	You shall break them with a rod of iron	
	and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."	
2:10	Now therefore, O <u>kings</u>, be wise;	
	be warned, O <u>rulers</u> of the earth.	
2:11	Serve the LORD with fear,	
	and rejoice with trembling.	
2:12	Kiss ***the Son***, lest he be angry,	
	and you perish in the way,	
	for his wrath is quickly kindled.	
	<u>Blessed</u> are all who take refuge in him.	

Amen.