

God of the Future

The Return of the King

Ps 107:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble

³ and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in;

⁵ hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

⁶ **Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.**

⁷ He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.

⁸ **Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!**

⁹ For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons,

¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.

¹² So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.

¹³ **Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.**

¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.

¹⁵ **Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!**

¹⁶ For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.

¹⁷ Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;

¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

¹⁹ **Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.**

²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.

²¹ **Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!**

²² And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

²³ Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters;

²⁴ they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep.

²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.

²⁶ They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight;

²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.

²⁸ **Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.**

²⁹ He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

³⁰ Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

³¹ **Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!**

³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

³³ He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground,

³⁴ a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants.

³⁵ He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.

³⁶ And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in;

³⁷ they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield.

³⁸ By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish.

³⁹ When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow,

⁴⁰ he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes;

⁴¹ but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks.

⁴² The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth.

⁴³ Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

PSALM 107

What is the Future?

LAST WEEK, WE LOOKED AT HISTORY. The two psalms that ended Book IV recounted Israel's long history from Abraham to the Judges. This week I want to ask the opposite question. **What is the future?** I'm asking the question because of both our Psalm (see chart at end for a visual reference), and the placement of it as the introductory song in the last of the five mini-books of the Psalter.

Googling “what is the future” gives you a very different set of hits from the same thing found with “what is history.” Now, instead of definitions trying to explain history, you get a bunch of wishful thinkers trying to invent their own future. Some quotes can serve as examples:

- “I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.”

~ Thomas Jefferson

- “No dream is too big. No challenge is too great. Nothing we want for our future is beyond our reach.”

~ Donald Trump

- “It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”

~ William Shakespeare

- “Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.”

~ Robert H. Schuller

What do these all have in common? **Positive thinking** about **your ability** to determine the future. That’s pretty much what I think most people think the future is, unless they are in a Romantic comedy or *Terminator* movie. Then, you can’t overcome fate.

As a Christian, I'm not against the idea that we determine the future in *some* sense. Clearly, our choices have consequences. I cannot get to church, for example, if I stay in bed. Getting out of bed, getting ready to go, getting in the car, and driving to church was a series of choices I made today that determined that I would be in church rather than not be in church. If I didn't make them, I wouldn't be here. End of story. Thus, those decisions did shape the future, again in *some* sense.

But I think a lot of people believe that human decisions are the *only* sense in which the future is determined. In other words, it is "open" to infinite possibilities, with no Guiding Hand overseeing it. **This gives the future little to no actual meaning**, especially when so many billions of choice-makers, who make conflicting choices by the second with one another, are the future-makers. This is the stuff that gives fuel to many sci-fi movies, and even some Christians have given versions of this.

It's very easy to want to do this with the future for one simple reason. **We do not know the future**. Therefore, projecting ourselves upon everything else in the universe, we assume that it isn't knowable to anyone. This is

completely different from the past. We know all kinds of the things about the past, and curiously, it is part of human nature to want to make sense of it, to give it meaning and purpose. Especially when the past has been so horrible that if we can't find purpose in it, it becomes unbearable.

As we saw last time, it is good and right to find purpose in history. This is because God directs history the way he wants it. That's how Book IV of the Psalter ended. But **imagine** if we imported this view of the future upon history. There could be no sense to history because at some point in time, history was still an open future, decided entirely by some kind of libertarian freedom, totally apart from God. If you are going to find meaning in history, then you simply must believe that the future also has meaning, and it is not meaning that you give to it.

It is the **meaning that God gives it**. God determines the future even as he directs the past. If he doesn't, then again, he didn't direct the past, because it was at one-time in the future. So, what does all of this have to do with our song today? Indirectly, **it has bearing if we consider it from the point of view of the Psalmist**. It also has remarkable parallels, almost an unfathomable amount of them, in the NT.

The Future and Book V of the Psalter

But let's begin with its placement in **Book V**. I want to talk about this for a moment, because it is important to learning how to read the Psalms. In the past few years, an interesting discipline has emerged among scholars which seeks to read Psalms as a book, and therefore to make sense of its editorial thought processes.¹ Why did this song go here and not there. Why are some psalms that we know about left out of the Psalter?² Etc.? I've been giving you a lot of thoughts from this discipline throughout our time in the Psalms. So, it is nothing particularly new now.

¹ It is rather blandly called "editorial criticism" or "canonical criticism," which are both sub-disciplines of textual criticism. Unfortunately, textual criticism is not well received in many conservative circles, and part of the reason is because Liberals basically own the field, and the discipline has sometimes been used to undermine biblical authority and divine inspiration. But this is not at all necessary, as this same field is used in basically any ancient book, trying to understand how we got the text that we have received. In the several books from this field that I have been using throughout this study, I have seen very little by way of using editorial criticism to undermine anything. Instead, those books have really helped me learn how to read the Psalms as a book, which is a greatly needed thing, considering that they are 150 diverse poems with ranges of authorship spreading out over nearly 1,000 years! As I have said in these sermons before, how the editor, the compiler of the Psalter did what he did is in my estimation itself divinely inspired. This is what I hope to show you here.

² Importantly, there aren't many of them. Charlesworth's *Pseudepigrapha* Vol. II contains five "psalms of David" (151-155, the first of which is actually included in the LXX—the Bible of the NT authors—as divinely inspired), The famous Prayer of Manasseh, about 18 "psalms of Solomon," and a handful of others that the Jews considered important but not inspired.

But let's see how this works itself out in Book V. Here is a foreshadowing of things we will be seeing. [Book V begins in Psalm 107](#) and concludes with the last Psalm of the book: [150](#). Obviously, 150 is a nice, round number. This is almost certainly not accidental. Neither is the order of the songs in this mini-book.

For example, one scholar demonstrates how we have the following paralleling of songs going on so that the book actually repeats itself in a way:

Parallelism of Psalms in Book V		
105-106	Historical Psalms	135-36
107	Psalm for the Exiles Returning from Babylon	137
108-110	Psalms of/for David	138-145
111, 112	Alphabetic Psalms	145
113-118	Hallelujah Psalms	146-150 ³

He also suggests that the first 12 songs of the book (Ps 107-119) could very easily have been used as part of a [Feast of Unleavened Bread liturgy](#) of songs that were to be sung,

³ Chart in [Michael D. Goulder](#), *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150)*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 258, ed. David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1998), 14. I've added the top line from his next chart on p. 15, which includes the last two songs of Book IV (105-106). His analysis explains why he thinks this happened, and it has to do with having just the right number of songs to be able to have liturgical singing during various feasts. It is a truly fascinating insight. For the songs of ascent for the future, see p. 111 chart.

once each evening and morning for throughout the special feast week:

Passover Liturgy				
Based on Ex 12:16; Deut 16:1-8; Ezra 1-6, and Modern Jewish Practice ⁴				
Nisan month	Exodus Event/Place	Exodus Reference	Psalm	
			Evening	Morning
15th	Passover in Egypt (Rameses)	12:6-10	105	106 ⁵
16th	Succoth	12:37	107	108 ⁶
17th	Etham	13:20	109	110 ⁷
18th	Pi-hahiroth	14:1	111	112 ⁸
19th	Pharaoh sends army/Pillars of Cloud and Fire/Sea Divide	14:21	113	114
20th	Crossing the Sea/Egyptians drowned	14:24-25	115	116
21st	Song of the Sea	15:1	117	118 ⁹

He shows the same thing with the Songs of Ascent (Ps 120-134) and the story of the return of the exiles as told by Nehemiah:

⁴ Goulder, 192-95. The modern Jewish practice of the Feast of Unleavened Bread reads Ex 12:21-51 on the first day; Ex 13:1-16 on the third day, the Red Sea story, Ex 13:17-15:26 on the seventh day. Tractate Sopherim has Psalm 114 to be sung on the seventh day.

⁵ These two songs with their two histories that end and begin at almost the same place are very well suited to be sung for the evening/morning idea.

⁶ "I will wake at dawn" (Psalm 108:2).

⁷ "... from the womb of the morning" (110:3).

⁸ Being both acrostic songs, they are suited nicely for the evening/morning idea.

⁹ "This is the day that the LORD has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it" (118:24).

"The LORD is God, and he has made his light [taken as the morning sun] to shine upon us" (27).

**The Feast of Booths Liturgy, Nehemiah's History,
and the Songs of Ascent¹⁰**

Tishri (month)	Topic	Nehemiah Reference	Psalm	
			Evening	Morning
15 th	Lament at Jerusalem's Plight	1:1-11	120	
15 th	Artaxerxes: Journey from Susa	2:1-9		121
16 th	Arrival at Jerusalem, Seeking Good	2:10-18	122	
16 th	Contempt and Scorn	2:19-20, 3:33-38		123
17 th	God Frustrates Planned Attack	4:1-17	124	
17 th	Usurers and Enslavers Capitulate	5:1-13, 19		125
18 th	Wall Completed Despite Plots	6:1-14	126	
18 th	Gates Guarded, Houses to Build	6:15-7:5		127
19 th	Repopulation	11:1-2, 7:26-33	128	
19 th	Tobiah and Eliashib Discountenanced	13:4-14		129
20 th	Sabbath-Breaking	13:15-22	130	
20 th	Mixed Marriages Forbidden	13:23-29		131
21 st	Priesthood Cleansed and Provided For	13:30-31	132	
21 st	Dedication Procession	12:27-43		133
22 nd			134	

Finally, another scholar shows how the entire book forms a fantastic symmetrical pattern that paves the way for the climactic ending. All of this he calls “The Return of the King” (see full chart next page).

The Return of the King. The phrase is familiar, because it is the third book of the third best-selling novel of all time. At over 150 million copies in print, **J. R. R. Tolkien's** *The Lord of the Rings* revolves around several character plot lines. The argument could be made that the most important plot is that the throne of men has been vacated by a long-since-

¹⁰ Table in Goulder, 111.

dead line of kings. But there is one heir remaining. Hidden in obscurity, not wanting to come out of the shadows, it is the story of the ascendancy of **Strider**, Ranger of the North who becomes to **Aragorn** King of Gondor, and his glorious wedding to Arwen is the climactic moment of the story.

In Tolkien's Christian worldview, Aragorn is unquestionably the "**Christ-as-King**" character. As someone put it, "**In Tolkien's use of prophecy there is a strong parallel with Christ's messiahship.**"¹¹ It is not accidental that Tolkien named the third book *The Return of the King*. Nor is it accidental that one of our scholars titled his treatment of Book V of the Psalter the same thing.

Think about how amazing this is **with regard to the future**. What we are talking about is not direct, but indirect—the compilation of various rag-tag songs into a cohesive unit that tells this story hundreds of years before it ever happened. This is an altogether different kind of way of looking at Christ in the OT that many have not understood. We know about typology or prophecy or names or even the figure of

¹¹ Emily Hunt, "Wilderness, Wanderers and Their Theological Significance in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," in *Wilderness: Essays in Honour of Frances Young*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 181.

Organization of The Psalter: Book V			
Psalm	Key Word/Phrase	Key Idea	Key Word
104			
105			
106	Hallelujah Hallelujah		
107	"Give thanks to Yahweh for his goodness"		hesed ¹³
108	DAVID		hesed
109	DAVID		hesed
110	DAVID	ROYAL Center	
111		Acrostic part I	
112		Acrostic part II	
113	Hallelujah		
114		Possible single song	
115		Possible single song	hesed
116			
117	Hallelujah		hesed
118	"Give thanks to Yahweh for his goodness"		hesed
119	TORAH		Torah
120			
121			
122			
123			
124			
125			Zion
126			Zion
127			
128			Zion
129			Zion
130			
131			
132		ROYAL Center	
133			Zion
134			Zion
135	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Zion
136	"Give thanks to Yahweh for his goodness"		
137			Zion
138	DAVID		King
139	DAVID		
140	DAVID		
141	DAVID		
142	DAVID		
143	DAVID		
144	DAVID	ROYAL Center	King
145	DAVID		King
146	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Hallelujah
147	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Hallelujah
148	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Hallelujah
149	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Hallelujah
150	Hallelujah Hallelujah		Hallelujah
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ends Book IV ■ First Natural Division of Book V ■ Second Natural Division of Book V ■ Third Natural Division of Book V 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Steadfast Love songs ■ Torah song ■ Zion songs ■ King songs ■ Hallelujah songs 	

¹² This column and the next is compiled from **Leslie C. Allen**, *Psalms 101–150 (Revised)*, vol. 21, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 75.

¹³ This column is a compilation from **Michael K. Snearly**, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

107-18 (steadfast love) (**107:1**, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 108:5, 109:12, 16, 21; 115:1; 117:2; 118:1, 2, 4, **29**)

119 (torah)

120-37 (Zion) (125:1; 126:1; 128:5; 129:5; 133:3; 134:3; 135:21; 137:1, 3)

138-45 (king) (138:4; 144:10; 145:1)

146-50 (hallelujah) (**146:1**, 2, 10; 147:1, 12, 20; 148:1, 5, 7, 13, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6)

(bold equals first or last word of the unit)

the Angel of the LORD in the OT. But now we have the added layer of a collection of songs that reach their climax with a coming Messiah-King that results in five songs filled with Hallelujah!

Certainly, whoever put these together (my vote is still on Ezra), was full of the Spirit of God and full of faith in the promises of the OT regarding a coming Deliverer. But when we understand that no one had a full grasp of who this person would be, yet the songs in the Psalter clearly do, there is only one way to account for this. **A God who knows the future perfectly** put his providential hand over its compilation, so that we can now look back on it with wonder and awe and say in an even more profound way than did the Jews of the OT: Hallelujah! This morning, we are going to start our final leg of our journey in the Psalms by looking at Psalm 107.

Psalm 107

Exhortation to Praise (1-3)

Psalm 107 begins, “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps 107:1). There are three songs in Book V that contain this exact statement at the beginning, each of which have the last word of the immediately preceding song ending in “hallelujah.” They are Ps 107, 118, and 136. Hence, you have three natural divisions within the collection (*see chart on the previous page*). This gives you a sense that the flavor of this collection will not be as dark as so many songs up to now have been.

It is an anonymous song of praise. However, there is much reason, as we will see throughout the next few sermons, to think that Nehemiah and/or Ezra had something to do with the compilation of this Book, and in this case, perhaps even the psalms. One verse is particularly instructive here. “And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.’ And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ezra 3:11). They are singing the very same thing as our

psalm!¹⁴ We'll see even more of how this is **relevant in a moment**.

But first, let's think about **what it is saying**. The need to give thanks to God is of paramount importance. For a thankful heart is one that receives rather than declines the God of history and the future. These words here come immediately after three great songs detailing God's creation, his redemption, and his forgiveness. Truly, he is a good God. And to not be thankful for his goodness means that you would rather have over your life something or someone who is not good.

It is also to be thankful that he is a God who keeps his promises. "**Steadfast love**" (*hesed*) is the word that opens this song and is the final word of Psalm 118.¹⁵ It becomes **the bookends** of everything in between. As we have seen before, *hesed* is God's steadfast covenant keeping, his faithfulness to his promises, his condescending grace to his creatures.

¹⁴ In Nehemiah, a couple of verses are interesting here: "And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving" (Neh 12:8); "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres" (Neh 12:27).

¹⁵ **Snearly** sees a division ending here (see chart above).

Therefore, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south” (2-3). Anyone who has been saved by Jesus is to sing this song, as Luke tells us at Jesus’ birth (Luke 1:68). These words point to the eschatological fulfillment of Christ saving the nations, as vs. 3 is quoted in the Gospels (Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29). But the original setting was almost certainly the return of the exiles from captivity. As such, we can introduce the structure of the song at this point. It divides into seven units:

- 107:1–3 A call to returned exiles to praise Yahweh
- 107:4–9 Braving a return overland
- 107:10–16 Freed from the prison of exile
- 107:17–22 Healed from the punishment of sin
- 107:23–32 Braving a return by sea
- 107:33–41 God’s control of life in the land
- 107:42–43 A closing call for moral reflection¹⁶

They form a chiasm, with the center focusing on repentance and salvation:

¹⁶ Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150 (Revised)*, vol. 21, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 88.

- A. Exhortation to praise (1-3)
- B. God delivers those in the desert (4-9)
- C. God delivers those in darkness (10-16)
- D. Fools repent and find salvation (17-22)
- C¹. God delivers those in the deep (23-32)
- B¹. God delivers those in the desert (33-42)
- A¹. Exhortation to be wise (43)¹⁷

The original audience who first sang this song was undoubtedly **the remnant** that God allowed to return to the Jerusalem. They are those gathered in from the lands, who had been scattered among the nations (**Lev 26:33; Deut 28:64; Jer 13:24**; etc.). These are the ones Nehemiah and Ezra brought extensive reform to in order to bring back proper worship. Now, God has graciously allowed them to return, and read in tandem with the previous song, this is after failure after failure after failure on their side of the covenant. But God is faithful and his steadfast love endures forever.

God Delivers Those in the Desert (4-9)

¹⁷ **Robert L. Alden**, "Chiastic Psalms (III): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150," *JETS* 21/3 (Sept 1978): 202 [199-210].

What the song wants to remember is their plight during these many past years. The four main sections in the middle of the song each begin (in the ESV) with the word “some”: *some* wandered (4), *some* sat (10), *some* were (17), *some* went (23). Drawing on the ubiquitous Exodus imagery found everywhere in the Bible (or perhaps the Patriarchs wandering around without a city), this section talks about how “*some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in*” (4). Having no the city to call home is parallel wandering in the desert wastes. For them, it was being *dragged away from Jerusalem* into captivity. But the eternal city, Jerusalem that is from above (Gal 4:26), the eternal city with foundations made by God (Heb 11:10) is the cry of true believers, even as it was for Abraham. And until we reach it, it is in some respects like we are wasting away in a dry desert without a home.

“*Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them*” (5). You would think it would say their “body.” But it says their “soul.” This is a thirst of a different kind, a hunger that food cannot satisfy. They are away from God’s good presence, and they are being consumed in spirit. This is

precisely why God is needed throughout the song, as we will continue to see.

“Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble” (6a). When you feel far from God’s presence, or perhaps you have grieved the Holy Spirit as they did, when your soul is empty and your spirit is in desperate need, what do you do? Many will run to other things, hoping to find satisfaction in those. Even Christians do this. Just about anything seems to suffice ... except God. We attempt to find pleasure in work, women, wine, sports, song, or sin. Some good things. Some evil things. But all can become idols of the heart. The only solution is to cry to the LORD in your trouble.

“... and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in” (6b-7). The point of this teaching is to reinforce why you are to praise the LORD. He delivers when you call, not for your sake alone, but for his own Name’s sake and because he is the covenant God who has sworn to do so forever. This is *hesed*. And how does he do it? “The straight road.” This is the road that is not crooked with sin, but straight with holiness, even while you are in the wilderness. You see? They are walking in the desert *until* they reach the city.

The point is, if you cry to the LORD, no matter what the reason, he will put you on the straight road straight, and lead you while you walk on it all the way until you reach the Glorious City in the future. This is actually the promise of the Gospel itself in Christ. The Gospel begins, “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5-6). It ends by saying, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [Christ]” (Rev 21:2-3).

How? Because he has already walked that road ahead of you. This was done through the one whom John the Baptist said, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isa 40:3; cf. Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). Not for you. For God. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, whose perfect life makes straight all our crooked choices when we cry out to him in faith.

“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man” (8). It isn't just

Israel that God did this for. It was any who called out to him in need. And this certainly anticipates the calling out to him by all the Gentile peoples who are scattered over the earth because of Babel. When you hear the voice of Christ speaking like this, cry out to him.

Cry out to him, “**For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things**” (9). As the Lord Jesus himself said, “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied” (Luke 6:21). He does not disappoint those whose spirits are empty, whose flesh is weak. He feeds you with food unseen, food from heavenly places, the very bread of angels, manna from heaven, his very own resurrected body and life-forgiving blood (**Ps 78:25; John 4:14; 6:35**), a fountain of water welling up to eternal life. If you don’t believe it, why not call out to him and see for yourself?¹⁸

¹⁸ To help you remember vv. 4-9, notice the chiasm:

- A. Wandering in desert Wastes (4)
- B. Hungry and Thirsty Souls (5)
- C. They cried to the LORD (6a)
- D. He delivered them (6b)
- D¹. He led them by a straight way (7)
- C¹. Let them thank the LORD for his love and works (8)
- B¹. Satisfied Longing Souls (9a)
- A¹. Fills will good things (9b)

God Delivers Those in Darkness (10-16)

The **third section** is kind of a repeat of the second, except the metaphor changes. Instead of deliverance in the desert, it is deliverance in the **darkness**.¹⁹ “Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons” (Ps 107:10). The darkness is called “**the shadow of death**” (think Psalm 23). This darkness is the darkness of a prison cell, where they are bound by iron bars.

Why? “For they had rebelled against the words (Hb: *emer*; Gk: *logion*) of God, and spurned the counsel of the **Most High**” (11). In other words, they are here as punishment for their own sins. What are those sins? **Rebellion** against God’s words. This time the “word” is plural (words). He told them what he expected in this covenant, and they did the opposite at every turn. It was written down, plain as day for anyone to go and read or hear

¹⁹ Like the previous section, notice the chiasm in vv. 10-16:

- A. Sitting as prisoners (10)
- B. Rebellion against God’s words (11)
- C. He forces them into hard labor (12)
- D. They cried to the LORD (13a)
- D¹. He delivered them from distress (13b)
- C¹. He brought them out and burst their bonds (14)
- B¹. Thank him for his steadfast love and works (15)
- A¹. Shattered prison bars (16)

read. They didn't care. This is called God's counsel (possibly "council" where he deliberated the message in heaven). The NET Bible has the interesting translation, "...and rejected the instructions of the Sovereign King."

What does rebellion against God get you? Captivity, slavery, imprisonment. This is the lesson of Babel, which is much more than just being scattered so they can't build a tower. The Scripture often refers to the darkness and imprisonment of the Gentiles (Isa 42:7; 61:1; Matt 4:15-16; Luke 4:18; Acts 17:26-27; etc.), and sometimes under hostile evil heavenly powers (1Co 10:20; Eph 6:12; Gal 4:3; etc.). But it also speaks this way of the Jews, who when they betrayed the LORD to follow the gods and their evil ways, were punished time and again with the same kind of darkness and imprisonment—often quite physically. "So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help" (12). They were humbled and they were helpless. And this is the way all men are without Christ the Light who dispels the darkness and Christ the Key who unlocks all the prison doors.

"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress" (13). We've seen this

verse before, and we will see it again two more times. It is the chorus of the song:

"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress"	
וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָרָה לָהֶם מִמַּצְרוֹקוֹתֵיהֶם יִצִּילֵם: (Ps 107:6 WTT)	"wayyic`áqû ´el-yhwh(´ädönäy) Baccar lähem mimmücûl qôtêhem yaccîlêm" (Ps 107:6 BHT)
וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָרָה לָהֶם מִמַּצְרוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם: (Ps 107:13 WTT)	"wayyiz`áqû ´el-yhwh(´ädönäy) Baccar lähem mimmücûl qôtêhem yôšî`ëm" (Ps 107:13 BHT)
וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָרָה לָהֶם מִמַּצְרוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם: (Ps 107:19 WTT)	"wayyiz`áqû ´el-yhwh(´ädönäy) Baccar lähem mimmücûl qôtêhem yôšî`ëm" (Ps 107:19 BHT)
וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָרָה לָהֶם מִמַּצְרוֹקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹצִיאֵם: (Ps 107:28 WTT)	"wayyic`áqû ´el-yhwh(´ädönäy) Baccar lähem ûlmimmücûl qôtêhem yôcî`ëm" (Ps 107:28 BHT)

What is [the point of a chorus](#)? It is the central idea you are trying to convey, the thing that gets repeated the most often, the thing that is therefore most remembered. Thus, you cry out to the LORD in trouble, and he delivers you from distress. Keep crying out. He will keep delivering.

How did he bring them out? “[He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart](#)” (14). I want you to be thinking about the Return of the King even in this song, for it is here. The first half of this verse is seen in something like, “[The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them light has dawned](#)” (Matt 4:16). This is a quotation of [Isaiah 42:7](#) in Matthew’s

Gospel, spoken to the Gentiles when Jesus left Nazareth and went and lived in Capernaum by the sea.

Curiously, in a very physical, tangible way, we read about the other part in a story with **Paul and Silas**. They were “**praying and singing hymns to God** (what might they have been singing?), and “**the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened” (**Acts 16:25-26**). When the jailer who had been sleeping [oops] woke and saw the doors opened, he was about to kill himself, but Paul cried out, “**Do not harm yourself, we are all here**” (**28**). Trembling with great fear he “**fell down**” (notice in our psalm how God “**bowed their hearts down ... they fell down**” and cried, “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**” The reply came, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household**” (**31**). And they spoke the word of the Lord, that is talked about Jesus to him and to all who were in his house. Just what passage do you suppose they read to him? I suggest it was Psalm 107.**

After all in the household who believed had been baptized, it says, “**And he rejoiced along with his entire**

household that he had believed in God” (34). But this is exactly the next words of our song. “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron” (Ps 107:15-16). Vs. 15 becomes the second half of chorus, and it also repeated four times:

“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!”	
יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם: Ps 107:8 WTT)	yôdû lyhwh(la´dönäy) HasDô wüniplü´ôtäyw libnê ´ädäm (Ps 107:8 BHT)
Ps : יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם: 107:15 WTT)	yôdû lyhwh(la´dönäy) HasDô wüniplü´ôtäyw libnê ´ädäm (Ps 107:15 BHT)
Ps : יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם: 107:21 WTT)	yôdû lyhwh(la´dönäy) HasDô wüniplü´ôtäyw libnê ´ädäm (Ps 107:21 BHT)
Ps : יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם: 107:31 WTT)	yôdû lyhwh(la´dönäy) HasDô wüniplü´ôtäyw libnê ´ädäm (Ps 107:31 BHT)

Fools Repent and Find Salvation (17-22)

Thanking the Lord in the jailer story meant believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of their sins, **being baptized**, and rejoicing. These are the actions that are then accompanied by the words of song and praise. Given such close parallels to Psalm 107, we might think it should be the same. In fact, this is exactly what we see next in the fourth section of our

psalm, which happens to also be **the center section** of the chiastic structure, and therefore of utmost importance.

“Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction” (Ps 107:17). The Psalmist now returns to the Exodus event for a parallel for his own people who had acted similarly. “They loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death” (18). One thinks of **the manna they ate** and got sick of, then of the quail that God sent to until they wanted to vomit it out. That was a spiritual tempting of God in the previous song. It is remembered again here. The point now is that in doing such things, in **complaining** about every good deed God brought to them, they drew near to the very gates of death itself. Here, Sheol is viewed as a city, the anti-city.²⁰ They didn’t have a city to call home, so they made Sheol and Death their city. They were killing themselves by their sin and iniquity. This is what sin is: a making your ghoulish bed with corpses and demons and ghosts.

How did they do it in the days that brought about the captivity? **2Chr 36:16** is instructive. “But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and

²⁰ This observation is from Allen, 90.

scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy” (2Ch 36:16). Today it is the same way. Sound doctrine, right worship, godly living, most of all just the very Bible itself are despised in many churches. It is more and more difficult to find these things present, let alone pervasive in *The Church of What’s Happenin’ Now*. Do not despise the words of God, for this is the sin that brought Israel into captivity.

“Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (19). The chorus returns again. How he did deliver this time? “He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction” (20). We move from “words” to “word.” “Word” is *logos* in the LXX. It doesn’t always refer to Christ, but we know that *logos* does refer to Christ many times. Might it here?

One can easily think of the many times that the Angel of the LORD healed a plague or gave the people water from the rock or whatever. But the NT is also interesting. A centurion once said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matt 8:8, Luke 7:7). Another time, “he cast

out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick” (Matt 8:16). Jesus is fulfilling this verse.

Therefore, “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man” (Ps 107:21). The chorus. We read in the Gospels, “...and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him [Jesus]” (Luke 13:16).

“And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!” (Ps 107:22). This is exactly what Ezra and Nehemiah were doing in the reforms of Israel once they came back to the land. The first goal was to rebuild the temple so that they could once more offer sacrifices, which could only be done at the temple. Once this happened, they installed singers, hosts of Levites who would lead the people into the procession of worship, using indeed this song and many others in Book V. You can see how relevant this was to those people newly arrived for the first time in 70 years to the Promised Land.

But it also applies to you. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name” (Heb 13:14-

15). The Name is Jesus. And our sacrifices are praise and holy lives pleasing to God (**Rom 12:1-2**). Then you will fulfill the words you sing in this song.

God Delivers Those in the Deep (23-32)

The darkness returns in the fifth section, as the chiasm works its way out. This time, the darkness is likened to the brooding dark deep. “Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters” (**Ps 107:23**). I believe something like the first chapter of Jonah is being used metaphorically for the people of the psalmist’s day who were acting in similar ways contrary to the LORD. It wouldn’t be difficult to make the same applications today. Think of that story as we continue.

“They saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits’ end” (**24-27**). So what do they do? They sing the chorus of Psalm 107. “Then they

cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (28). “He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven” (29-30). While thinking of Jonah, one can also think of the Red Sea with its wind so strong it made the waters part, which would be appropriate for a song that would begin the festival singing week of Passover from this collection. It is also quite easy to think of the storm-sea miracles of Jesus with his disciples found in the gospels (Matt 8:23-27; 14:22-33). For Jesus is once again the fulfillment of Psalm 107.

Therefore, again, “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders” (Ps 107:31-32). Now, the chorus is accompanied in the LXX with *ekklesia*—Church! Thus, when you come to hear the things you are hearing now, together you then turn around and respond to God in song and praise and thanksgiving.

God Delivers Those in the Desert (33-41)

The song is nearly complete now. This chiasm **returns to the desert**. But the chorus is no longer present. This sixth section is the first since **vv. 1-3** that does not begin with “some.” It is no longer about man, but God. The power of the King returns. “**He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants**” (**33-34**). We learn about these kinds of things with both Israel and its neighbors (think Sodom and Gomorrah).

The flip side is, “**He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.**” (**35**). God does this. But the real question is, for whom?

“**There he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in**” (**36**). So first, they have to be hungry, **spiritually hungry**. As we have seen in the chorus, they have to cry out to the LORD. But what he gives them is not the city of Death, but the city of Life in which they may make their home.

What will they do there? “**They sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield**” (**37**). The book of Amos

ends nine agonizingly long chapters of lament and woe with this Messianic prophecy, “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old ... ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit” (Amos 9:11, 13-14). In other words, in Christ these things are given to believers.

“By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks” (Ps 107:38-41). Again, what kind of person? **A needy person.** The promise is that God, through good or ill, will preserve his people who trust in

him by faith and call out to him, and he will pour out judgment on those who persecute them.

Exhortation to be Wise (42-43)

Therefore, the song returns to where it began. But with a twist. Rather than just sing and praise, you are also **to learn**. It is an exhortation to be wise. “**The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD**” (Ps 107:42-43). Will you learn from the song, from the chorus, to cry to the LORD in your day of trouble, your hour of sin? Will you trust that he will deliver you from your distress—even if that means that “**your livestock are diminished**” in his sovereignty? What does that mean? It means that he lets you go through suffering, that he doesn’t give you all the world’s treasures, that you have pain and heartache in this life, that you suffer for the Name of Christ.

Will you learn to thank Christ for the wonders he has done among the children of man? You have heard many fulfillments of Christ in this song, a psalm which isn’t even

really about prophecy. Yet, it clearly has the future in mind. Because God knows it and oversaw its content and placement.

Will you thank him in good times, in bad times? Will you do so when he satisfies your longing soul, when he breaks your prison bars? Will you do so with sacrifices that cost you something in this life, obedience and praise? Will you do it in the congregation, the church of Jesus week in and week out?

Psalm 107 is a great way to begin getting our thinking onto [the Return of the King](#). It helped the Israelites coming back from captivity reorient their minds upon worship that was lost for seventy years. It does so for Christians who have lost their way, not realizing that their own bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, or those who have given up on the Church, or in their distress want to give up even on life itself. At the end of the day it is a psalm of wisdom. King Jesus is coming in the Psalms. King Jesus has come to us, just as the song spoke. Its message ends as it begins. Will you consider [the steadfast love of the LORD](#) that endures forever, to each generation anew, including most personally with me and with you?

Psalm 107	Christological Parallel
"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble." (Ps 107:2)	"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people." (Luke 1:68)
"And gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south." (Ps 107:3)	"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 8:11)
"Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in." (Ps 107:4)	"By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." (Heb 11:9-10) "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." (Heb 11:16)
"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them." (Ps 107:5)	"He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty." (Luke 1:53)
"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress." (Ps 107:6, 13, 19, 28)	"When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!'" (Matt 20:30) "And stopping, Jesus called them and said, 'What do you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Lord, let our eyes be opened.' And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him." (Matt 20:32-34)
"He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in." (Ps 107:7) "There he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in." (36c)	"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3:5-6) "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the

	throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’” (Rev 21:2-3)
“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man.” (8)	“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.” (Acts 2:22) “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.” (Acts 2:46)
“For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” (Ps 107:9)	“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.” (Luke 6:21)
“Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.” (Ps 107:10a) “He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.” (Ps 107:14a)	“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” (Matt 4:16)
Chorus (13)	“Praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25)
“Prisoners in affliction and in irons...” (Ps 107:10b) “...and burst their bonds apart.” (14b) “For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron”. (16)	“The prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened.” (Acts 16:26)
“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!” (Ps 107:15)	“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:31) “And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.” (Acts 16:34)
“He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.” (20)	“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and

	<p>my servant will be healed.” (Matt 8:8; Luke 7:7).</p> <p>“He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.” (Matt 8:16)</p>
<p>“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man.” (21)</p>	<p>“... and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him [Jesus].” (Luke 13:16)</p>
<p>“And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving...”</p> <p>“... and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!” (22)</p>	<p>“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Rom 12:1)</p> <p>“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:19-20)</p> <p>“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name.” (Heb 13:14-15)</p>
<p>“He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed”</p> <p>“Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,”</p> <p>“and he brought them to their desired haven.” (29-30)</p>	<p>“Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” (Matt 8:26)</p> <p>“And the men marveled.” (Matt 8:27)</p> <p>“And when he came to the other side...” (Matt 8:28)</p>
<p>“Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.” (32)</p>	<p>“I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” (Heb 2:12)</p>
<p>“He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.” (35)</p>	<p>“It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.” (Rev 21:6)</p>
<p>“They sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield.” (37)</p>	<p>“Behold the days are coming when ... the treader of grapes [shall overtake] him who sows the seed ... they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall</p>

	plant vineyards and drink their wine” (Amos 9:11-14)
“He pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes.” (40)	“Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him [Herod] down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.” (Acts 12:23) “Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the great! ... In a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” (Rev 18:2, 17)
“But he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks.” (41)	“Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages ... proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.” (Matt 9:35)