

Appendix B

(From *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order*
A New English Translation
A Faithful Version with Commentary)

The Structure of the Book of Psalms

[Editor's note: The following is a condensed, edited version of Appendix One, "Preliminary Suggestions on the Structure of the Book of Psalms," taken from Dr. Ernest Martin's book, *Restoring the Original Bible*, pp. 474-482. Reprinted in edited form with permission.]

There are 150 individual Psalms comprising the biblical book of Psalms—many of which are prophetic in content. In fact, there are more verses quoted in the New Testament from the book of Psalms which contain prophecies about Christ than from any other book of the Old Testament. Moreover, King David is considered by scholars to be typical of Christ. This fact alone means that Psalms is essentially prophetic. When one comprehends what the various Psalms mean and understands their contextual relationships, the prophetic significance of the book becomes quite evident. As we will see, the structure of the book of Psalms suggests certain prophetic concepts that may have gone largely overlooked.

The Five-fold Structure of Psalms: In the original Hebrew apportionment of the book of Psalms, the 150 psalms are arranged in five major divisions. These five "books" are not discernible in the ordinary *King James Version*, but are evident in the Hebrew manuscripts. The five divisions are:

Psalms 1-41	Book I
Psalms 42-72	Book II
Psalms 73-89	Book III
Psalms 90-106	Book IV
Psalms 107-150	Book V

The fact that there are five books is important—as the number five has a legal and prophetic meaning. For example, the prophet Isaiah gives *five* sequential references—each one identical—to the destruction that was to come upon Israel. Isaiah wrote, "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still" (1) Isa. 5:25; 2) 9:12; 3) Isa. 9:17; 4) Isa. 9:21; 5) Isa. 10:4).

This same five-fold prophetic repetition is also found in the book of Amos: "Yet you have not returned unto Me" (1) Amos 4:6; 2) Amos 4:8; 3) Amos 4:9; 4) Amos 4:10; 5) Amos 4:11). The sequential emphasis was to build up God's case against Israel for their refusal to follow Him. Finally, Israel is told: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). In other words, *five* chances were all that God was going to give them.

The book of Lamentations—a message by Jeremiah concerning the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple—was also given in a five-fold arrangement. The first chapter has 22 verses, with each verse beginning sequentially with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet [from *alpha* to *tau*], or from "A to Z" as it were. The second chapter has the same 22 Hebrew letters serially heading each verse. The third chapter, however, has 66 verses. This time the first three verses each begin with the first Hebrew letter; the next three verses each begin with the second Hebrew letter—and so on until all 22 letters are used. Finally, chapters four and five each have 22 verses as well—but for some reason these verses do not follow the Hebrew alphabet in sequence.

Nonetheless, the five-fold division is clear. *Five* seems to impart a sense of *certainty* to a prophecy. Other sections of the Bible use a five-fold arrangement as well. For example, the Law was divided into five parts: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This could signify that all of the laws necessary to govern Israel were to be found *only* within these five legal books.

Again, the book of Psalms is arranged in a five-fold scheme. Jewish scholars have noted the connection between the five books of the Law and the five divisions of Psalms. An ancient

commentary on Psalm 1:1 says: “Moses gave to the Israelites the five books of the Law; and corresponding with these David gave them the five books of the Psalms.” Most commentaries today provide a good discussion on the parallels between the books of the Law and the five divisions of Psalms.

The five books of the Psalms and the books of the Law:

Psalm 1-41	Book I	Genesis
Psalm 42-72	Book II	Exodus
Psalm 73-89	Book III	Leviticus
Psalm 90-106	Book IV	Numbers
Psalm 107-150	Book V	Deuteronomy

The Books of the Megillot: Another five-fold prophetic division of the Bible is called the Megillot. Like Psalms, the scrolls of the Megillot were to be read in the temple at certain times of the year—specifically during the three festival seasons and on two days commemorated in Jewish history.

Book	Season
Song of Songs	Passover
Ruth	Pentecost
Lamentations	9th/10th of Ab
Ecclesiastes	Tabernacles
Esther	Purim

Since the festival periods given to Israel are of prophetic significance, it follows that the five books assigned to be read at those designated times are a commentary on the meaning of the seasons.

- **Passover season**—salvation through Christ’s sacrifice **Song of Songs**—a springtime setting; theme of courtship
- **Pentecost**—the beginning of the Church (Acts 2) **Ruth**—describes the firstfruit harvest.
- **9th/10th of Ab**—anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple. **Lamentations**—laments the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC.
- **Tabernacles**—millennial reign of Christ **Ecclesiastes**—relates to the peaceful reign of Solomon, a type of Christ’s coming Kingdom.
- **Purim**—redemption of the nation of Judah **Esther**—describes a time when the Jews were delivered from destruction.

The five books of the Megillot and their corresponding festival seasons are an interesting comparison with the five divisions of the Psalms and the five books of the Law.

Psalm	Book	Law	Megillot
Psalm 1-41	Book I	Genesis	Song of Songs
Psalm 42-72	Book II	Exodus	Ruth
Psalm 73-89	Book III	Leviticus	Lamentations
Psalm 90-106	Book IV	Numbers	Ecclesiastes
Psalm 107-150	Book V	Deuteronomy	Esther

Focus on Book III of Psalms: When the books of the Psalms, the Law and the Megillot are compared with one another, there are amazing parallels in many of their features. To demonstrate this, let us focus on Book III of the Psalms, which corresponds to Leviticus and Lamentations.

Book III of the Psalms—chapters 73 to 89—frequently refers to the temple at Jerusalem and its defilement or destruction. Note for example the following passages:

- 1) “The sanctuary of God ... [is brought] into destruction” (73:17-18).
- 2) “The enemy has done wickedly in the sanctuary.... They have cast fire into Your

sanctuary; they have defiled [the temple] by casting the [dwelling place of Your name] to the ground” (74: 3, 7).

- 3) “The earth [land] and all its people are dissolved” (75:3).
- 4) “And His tabernacle is in Salem [Jerusalem], and His dwelling place in Zion. There [in Jerusalem] He broke the fiery arrows of the bow” (76:2-3).
- 5) “In the day of my trouble I sought the LORD.... Will the LORD cast off forever?” (77:2, 7).
- 6) “He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men” (78:60).
- 7) “O God, the heathen have come into Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy Temple ... and there was none to bury *them*” (79:1, 3).

The theme of destruction is quite obvious. The parallel book in the Megillot is Lamentations, ordained to be read on the eve of the anniversary of the temple’s destruction (Jeremiah 52:12–14; Zechariah 7:5; 8:19). The corresponding book in the Law is Leviticus—which focuses on the Levitical priesthood and their Temple duties. Thus, the three divisions support each other with a common theme—the *Temple*. It could hardly be coincidental that the books found such an arrangement.

Focus on Book IV of Psalms: There are also 17 psalms in the fourth division (chapters 90–106). Psalm 90 introduces the contextual subject by mentioning “a thousand years” (verse 4)—a millennium of time. Indeed, the general theme of Book IV is the millennial reign of Christ. But before peace can come to the earth, the Great Tribulation must first occur. Psalm 91 describes such a time in detail. Psalm 92 is about the Sabbath—which also pictures the millennial “rest” of God.

The millennial connection is clear in the remaining chapters of Book IV. Jewish authorities consecrated the Book of Ecclesiastes to be read during the Feast of Tabernacles—the festival which pictures the coming millennial age. Ecclesiastes describes the glories of the Solomonic kingdom, a type of Christ’s coming Kingdom.

Focus on Book V of Psalms: Book V of the Psalms (chapters 107–150) is associated with Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is called “the second law”—a summary of the earlier parts of the Law. The 44 psalms of Book V are primarily a summary of the subjects covered in the first four books of the Psalms. Book V also corresponds to Esther, which pictures the salvation of the Jewish people. Portions of these psalms describe how God will accomplish Israel’s salvation.

Books I and II—Davidic Psalms: Books I and II of the Psalms are songs composed exclusively by King David. At the end of Psalm 72 is the statement: “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Of course, there are other Davidic Psalms in later sections, but this indicates that Books I and II were written by David.

It is interesting that the number of Davidic Psalms are 72 (24 x 3). Since David arranged the Levitical singers into 24 “wards” (1 Chron. 25:8–31), it is likely that these 72 psalms were established to be sung by the Levites in their 24 divisions.

Book I of the Psalms corresponds to the Song of Songs, which was sung at the Passover season. All 41 psalms relate to the Passover, such as Psalm 22, which says that the wicked “pierced My hands and My feet” (verse 16)—a clear reference to the crucifixion of Christ at Passover.

Summary: There is a definite purpose for the structure of the book of Psalms. To be sure, there is more to the Psalms than just the message on the “surface.” While the full meaning of the book’s design is unclear, there is no question that the structure is profoundly important.

Since the book of Psalms is basically prophetic in nature, a prophetic theme can be found within its five-fold division. It may thus be summarized:

- **Book I** refers to Passover—the beginning of Israel as a nation, and the start of the New Testament plan of salvation with the death and resurrection of Christ.
- **Book II** is equated with Pentecost—the feast of the firstfruits. It shows Israel as a corporate body in the land of Israel, and pictures the creation of the New Testament Church.
- **Book III** is almost totally devoted to describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—and in many ways parallels the prophecies of the coming Great Tribulation.
- **Book IV** concerns the millennial reign of Christ and shows Israel re-gathered after their

ruin (as demonstrated in the context of Book III).

- **Book V** is equated with the feast of Purim—picturing the time when Judah (all Israel) shall again be delivered as they were in the time of Esther.

Since there are 150 psalms in the entire collection (3 x 50), there may have been a three-year reading plan—that is, the reading of one psalm for each of the 150 weeks of the triennial reading of the Law and the Prophets in the Temple (Acts 13:15). This possibility has been suggested in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. 12 (1911 edition), under the article, “Triennial Cycle.” This could well be one of the reasons for the arrangement of the book of Psalms.

It is important to recognize that there is far more to the book of Psalms than what first meets the eye. No one knows what every detail is designed to reveal. Yet, when one realizes that a consistent doctrinal and prophetic emphasis is found throughout the Old Testament, it could be that the Psalms are simply a reflection of those same themes. When one closely studies these designs, it becomes apparent that they are not at all haphazardly formed, but that they are created ultimately to further our understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures.