

## II. QUOTABLE QUOTES AND SUMMARY NOTES

*“The relation of the psalms to David brings out and emphasizes the organizing, unifying subject of the Psalter, the Kingdom of God. The subject is explicit in many psalms, of course, and it is easy to show that it is assumed by others. But the Davidic connection directs the reader to think of each psalm and the entire Psalter as an expression of faith in the reign of the LORD as the sphere in which individual and corporate life is lived.” (Mays, 97.)*

*“The relation to quite specific incidents in David’s life furnished by the titles and the story in Samuel demonstrates the true usefulness of the psalms and the purpose of their formulaic character as a religious interpretation of experience that is otherwise chaotic and meaningless.” (Mays, 97.)*

*“David is like a mirror, in which God sets before us the continued course of his grace.”  
(John Calvin.)*

*“The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.”  
(Psalm 34:22)*

*“The Davidic relation brings out the prophetic potential in the psalms. David is the king whose throne has an everlasting future based on the promise of God. The songs he sponsored and spoke are to be read in the context of that promise. They are ‘messianic,’ not because all of them are about the anointed of Israel, but rather in the sense that they are language to be spoken in the knowledge that God has chosen a Messiah and surely keeps God’s promises. The Davidic connection makes even the psalms of lament ‘messianic’; it discloses that suffering borne in trust and hope is a suffering that has a place in role in the reign of God. In turn, David’s life becomes an illustration . . . of the way in which a life whose hope is in the reign of God is to be lived.” (Mays, *The LORD Reigns*, 98.)*

## III. ISSUES

### A. Can a psalm (or other text of Scripture) mean more than that intended by its original writer?

Yes,<sup>1</sup> though there might still be some evangelicals who would disagree. Here are some justifications:

1. *The Divine Author* who inspired the human writer is able to convey more through a human writer’s writing than *the human writer* was aware or intended.
2. The Book of Psalms reflect the work not only of individual psalm writers, but of later editors who decided which psalms should go where in the book. (Most notable here are Psalms 1 and 2. My point: one must reckon with the intention of both the original author and the later editor, whose positioning of the psalm inevitably affects meaning.

*In short, individual psalms can have a fuller sense than that intended by the original author. (I like to use the analogy of a wagon wheel that has been converted into a chandelier, the original*

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<sup>1</sup> This isn’t to say that a text’s meaning is limitless or arbitrary, as at least some postmodern interpreters claim. My litmus test for a valid interpretation is “How does the text want to be heard in its context—primarily its immediate context but also within the canon of Scripture as a whole?”

*psalm being the wagon wheel, and its new life in the context of the Book of Psalms, including in relation to the Books of Samuel, where David is said to have written psalms as prophecies about the David to come, being the chandelier. What was a wagon wheel, with abiding meaning in its own right, has now become a light that illumines the future David, Jesus Christ.*

B. Can you remind me why we aren't just looking at individual psalms like we are accustomed to doing?

We are exploring *another, fuller and more comprehensive, way of seeing the Messiah in the Psalms* (in addition to reading Psalms like 2, 8, 22, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132 individually). It is this other way—based on the book's overarching structure which constitutes a message—that has been my focus. I believe Jesus understood his life and ministry in light of this overarching structure.

#### IV. RELEVANT PASSAGES

##### **Psalm 18 (also found in 2 Samuel 22)**

First, its title, which claims that 'David addressed this psalm to the LORD in a time when the LORD delivered David from the power of all his enemies and from Saul. This psalm "thus stands as theological commentary on the long story of David's struggle with Saul and with the foes of Israel, a story that in its telling usually goes without theological construal."<sup>2</sup>

##### **2 Samuel 23:1-7**

"The idea that David's words might be the word of the LORD about the future messianic king and kingdom begins with this final poem in the narrative of Samuel." (James Luther Mays, *The LORD Reigns*, p. 92.)

##### **Psalm 34 – another psalm that forges a link with David's time in Philistia**

"Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away." {See a translation for the remainder of the Psalm.}

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<sup>2</sup> Mays (*The Lord Reigns*) continues, "The reader is asked to think of each episode and of the whole in terms of the LORD's deliverance, a vast witness to the covenant loyalty of the LORD to his anointed king (see v. 51). The conclusion of the song even gives it a dimension of prophecy, by saying that this history of *hesed* [kind divine loyalty] will be the future of David's 'seed forever,' making David's story [both] pattern and type of what is to be." (Mays goes on to note that because the psalm showcases various elements present in other poems in the Book of Psalms, this Psalm is an invitation from the end of the story of David to read the psalms (particularly those ascribed to David) as a barometer of David's spiritual state in the narratives of Samuel that otherwise make little or no comment on David's theological frame of mind.