

1. INTRODUCTION:

- a. Psalm 3 is directly connected to Psalm 63. The events behind the Psalm are written in 2 Samuel chapters 13-16.
- b. Please see the 'Introduction' and 'Historical Context' material provided in the Authentic Discipleship article on Psalm 63.
- c. Zondervan's Expository Commentary says of Psalm 3 the following:
 - i. The mood of the Psalm is established by its genre. It is an *individual lament* psalm in which the main speaker expresses confidence in personal and individual deliverance by God (vv.3-8).
 - ii. The historical situation reflected in the Psalm finds David at a low moment in his life. Because of his sin with Bathsheba (2Sa 11-12), his life was torn apart by family troubles (2Sa 12:15-14:33), and his kingdom was wrenched from his grasp by Absalom's rebellion (2Sa 15:1-19:43). The hearts of Israel were with Absalom (2Sa 15:13). The anointed of the Lord [King David] (cf. Ps 2:6) was forced to flee Jerusalem and wait out the crisis at a wilderness desert encampment across the Jordan (2Sa 17:24).
 - iii. King David is torn between his desire to remain in Jerusalem, his desire to continue his rule, the state of dysfunction of his own family, his distaste of being forced to oppose and possibly have to kill his oldest son, the possibility of starting a civil war that could tear apart the nation, and his fear that his sin may have resulted in God abandoning him. Thus, the Psalm reflects the national situation as well as the personal feelings of David.
 - iv. The theological significance is that the Lord will redeem David his anointed one (King of God's people), establish his kingdom, and bless his people! Since Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One (King of Heaven and earth), the believer joins with Israel in the assurance of God's promise, the reception of the benefits of the people of God through the Messiah, the hope of the Messiah's complete victory, and the desire for the establishment of the age of Messianic blessing.

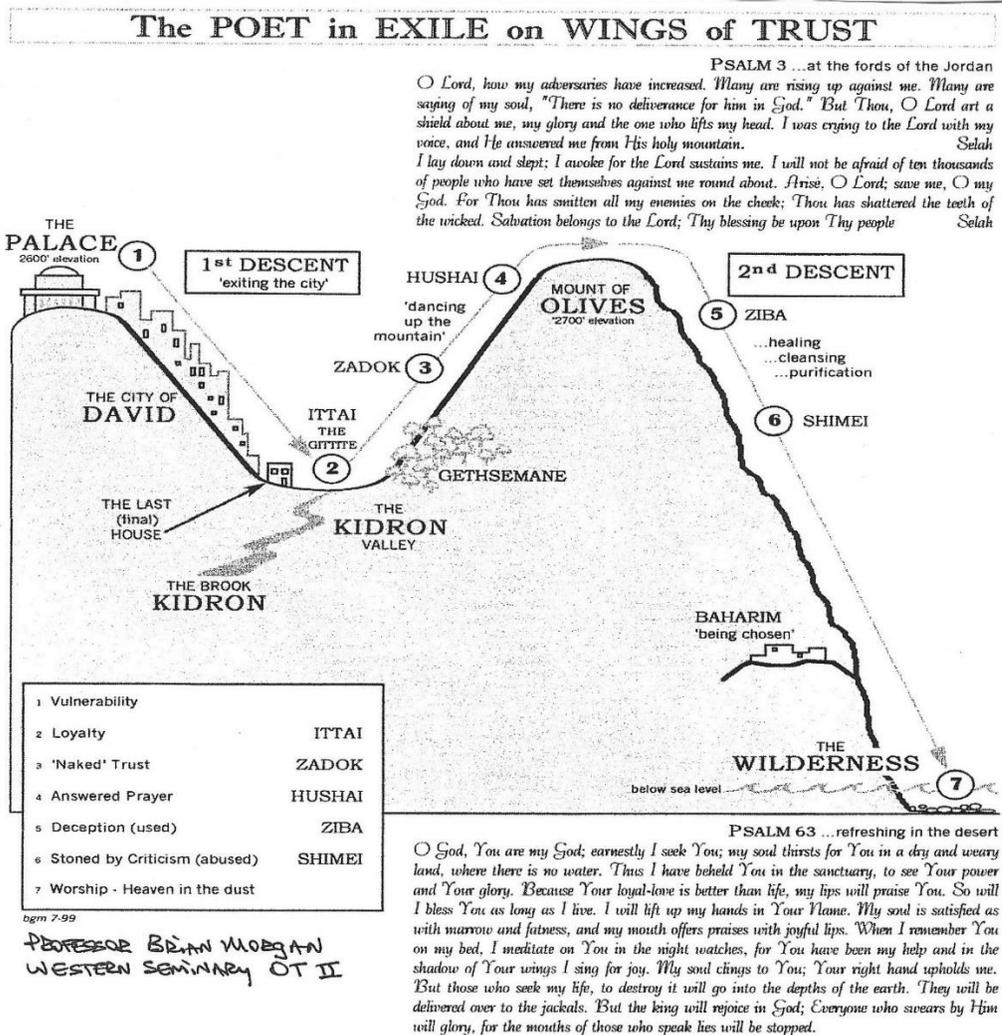
2. TIME OF WRITING AND AUTHOR:

- a. Scripture unilaterally refers to this poem as "a Psalm of David;" and comprise a part of a greater body of material provided in Scripture as Psalms 3 through 41 excluding 10 and 33. There is no credible alternative for the author of this Psalm other than king David.
- b. David reigned as king of Israel and Judah for forty years, from 1010 to 970 BC. The date of these events are likely to be at the midpoint of his reign, somewhere around 990 BC.
- c. Other known context-events in the historical time-table leading up to this story:
 - i. Copper smelting 5,500 BC
 - ii. Bronze age 3,500 BC
 - iii. Old Egyptian kingdom 3,050 BC
 - iv. Pyramids built 2,686-2,566 BC
 - v. Abraham 2,166-1,901 BC

Bible Survey - OT 15.4.3 - Psalm 3

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|------------------------------|----------------|
| vi. Joseph | 1,914-1,805 BC |
| vii. Hammurabi | 1,792-1,750 BC |
| viii. Moses | 1,526-1,406 BC |
| ix. 1 st Passover | 1,446 BC |
| x. Iron Age begins | 1,200 BC |
| xi. Prophet Samuel | 1,060-1,020 BC |
| xii. King David | 1,010-970 BC |

3. LITERARY CONTEXT – this diagram below presents a visual depiction of the events and their interaction described in 2 Samuel and Psalms 3 and 63. The geographical context of highs and lows is reflective of the literary progression of the story and Psalms. The early readers would have known and appreciated the author’s clever use of geography to show David’s emotional state of mind as the story plays out. Note the key in the box below left identifies David’s emotional & spiritual state of mind:



4. STRUCTURE:

- a. **Chiastic Literary Outline of 2 Samuel chapters 13-16 and Psalms 3 & 63 – Professor Brian Morgan.** This view of the Literary Structure makes it apparent the clever manner in which the ancients wrote. Not only is it impressive and beautiful, but made it far easier for memorization... especially useful in the context of a society where written documents were so costly and access was limited to them. Note the balance and counter-balance of the Chiastic structure:

PRELUDE: 1. The rape of Tamar – 13:1-22

2. The murder of Amnon by Absalom – 13:23-39

3. The exile of Absalom by David – 14:1-33

4. The rebellion of Absalom against David – 15:1-12

A David flees from Jerusalem – 15:13-18

B 10 concubines left behind violated by Absalom – 15:16, 16:22

C 5 encounters leaving the city – 15:19-16:13

2 reflections of loyalty – Ittai & Zadok – 15:19-22 & 15:23-26

1 immediate answer to prayer – Hushai – PSALM 3

2 reflections of disloyalty – Ziba & Shimei – 16:1-4 & 16:5-14

D Spiritual Restoration in the Wilderness – PSALM 63 – 16:14

D' Political Restoration – Mahanaim & news of Absalom's defeat – 16:24-18:33

C' 5 encounters by the Jordan – 19:15-20:2

2 reflections of disloyalty recanted – Shimei & Ziba – 19:15-20

1 immediate realignment of loyalty – Abisheai – 19:21-22

2 reflections of loyalty affirmed – Mephibosheth & Barzillai – 19:24-39

B' 10 concubines restored – 20:3

A' David returns to Jerusalem – 20:3

- b. **Thematic Outline – David's quietness and responsiveness amid his troubles:**

i. Lament over enemies – vs 1-2

ii. Prayer to God – vs 3-4

iii. Trust in God – vs 5-6

iv. Prayer for Deliverance and hope – vs 7-8

5. BIBLICAL EXEGESIS:

- a. Vs 1-2 O LORD, how many are my foes!
 How many rise up against me!
 Many are saying of me,
 “God will not deliver him.”

The use of “many” three times in the first two verses punctuates the magnitude of David’s problems. His life is a mess, he’s had to run for his life, and his beloved oldest son is trying to kill him. Note the progressive nature of David’s predicament – the first ‘many’ presumably refers to a general population who have been won over to Absalom. The second to those who have turned on David... presumably political and family friends and acquaintances. The third to past supporters who now doubt he will prevail. Bottom line is that David is in dire straits.

“O’ Lord” is God’s covenant name ‘YAWEH’, which is much like ‘ABBA-Father’ in the NT. ‘Lord’ is used six times in this eight verse Psalm, and ‘God’ is used twice... it is clear David is depending on his relationship with the covenant keep God to hear him, to defend him, and to bring about justice.

- b. Vs 3-4 But you are a shield around me, O LORD?
 you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.
 To the LORD I cry aloud,
 and he answers me from his holy hill.

In the midst of his dilemma, David proclaims that God is his “Shield” – his defense.

In the midst of his humiliation, David proclaims that God not only provides him with glory but with comfort and encouragement. The picture of “lifting up my head” – David is ashamed and is unworthy of facing God, but God as a loving Father lifts David’s face and makes eye contact... consolation and mercy displayed. ‘Cry aloud’ means a ‘loud cry’ exhibiting the anguish of a tortured soul, not unlike Messiah Jesus’ loud cry from the cross – Mark 15:37. David is assured of and grateful for God’s answer to his complaint.

- c. Vs 5-6 I lie down and sleep;
 I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.
 I will not fear the tens of thousands
 drawn up against me on every side.

‘Lie down’ is similar to sheep who won’t lie down unless their secure, and being able to ‘sleep’ speaks to the confidence of his security. ‘Wake again’ indicates David trusts God with his life. ‘Not fear the tens of thousands’ is hyperbole; it doesn’t speak of David’s strength but rather is speaking to the power of God making him secure.

- d. Vs 7-8 Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God!
 Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.
 From the LORD comes deliverance.
 May your blessing be on your people.

The first line is a call to battle, the second line is for David’s enemies to be humiliated [strike the

jaw], and then to be marked for their disgrace [with a battle wound]. David is confident that all deliverance comes from God, and all blessings as well. In the final line, the poet-shepherd-king asks God to bless His people Israel that David has been anointed to lead.

6. THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT:

- a. David's moral and character failure with Bathsheba and Uriah had several consequences including David losing the respect and authority within his family, which then descended into chaos. David had lost the respect of his eldest son Absalom when David refused to properly discipline his second son Amnon when he had raped his half-sister Tamar [Absalom's full sister and close friend]. The result is fratricide, the story is told in 2 Samuel 11:1-13:12. Although David had been restored before God, the family fallout led to a coup attempt and the resulting civil war between those loyal to Absalom and David.
- b. Psalms 3, 13, and 63 all flow out of the story presented in 2 Samuel 15:13-17:16. From the context, it appears that each Psalm references different stages of David's journey from Jerusalem into exile in the desert wilderness.
 - i. Psalm 3 follows David's move from Jerusalem to the Jordan (See the diagram on page two of this article). On the bank of the Jordan, David awaited news from his loyal friends on the plan and timing of Absalom's pursuit. Although the threat from Absalom is real and immanent, there was still a modicum of hope remaining that David's party might not have to cross over into exile.
 - ii. Psalm 13 picks up the story on the other side of the Jordan. David has been given the word that he must flee for his life as Absalom is on his way and intent on killing him. David and his party cross the Jordan and are now in exile on their way to the desert stronghold David employed when he had fled as a young man from king Saul... the Cave of Adullam. Wikipedia correctly presents this description of David's hideout – "The Cave of Adullam was originally a stronghold referred to in the Old Testament near the town of Adullam, in which David who was already anointed to succeed Saul as king, sought refuge from the latter. The word "cave" is usually used [in Scripture] but the term "fortress" which has a similar appearance [in Hebrew], is used as well. Given that this was a bandits' hideout; it would be reasonable to describe this as a fortified cave." Hence, a good place for David and his party to hole up and see what unfolds.
 - iii. Psalm 63 picks up the story after an indeterminate period of time at the Cave of Adullam. Professor Brian Morgan refers to Psalm 63 as "A Banquet in the Wilderness" where David's heart and soul that has been "Thirsting after God" finds comfort, solace, and fulfillment. This experience affects the rest of David's life. Psalm 63 is a masterful OT prophetic view of the grace and forgiveness that would become available through Messiah Jesus' ministry. David prophesied about this form of Grace about 1,000 years before Jesus accomplished it through the Cross, Resurrection and Pentecost.
- c. Several key themes are developed in the OT that find fulfillment in the NT:

- i. **Grace – The Law of Moses was a grace of a different order... having the power to set the standard of conduct and convict humanity of sin; however, it had no power to redeem and transform humanity. The Cross, Resurrection, and Pentecost ushered in a new level of Grace including the forgiveness of deliberate rebellious sin; and with the ministry of the Spirit in the indwelled believer, we are progressively being transformed into the nature and character of our Lord.**
- ii. **Egypt – was often used in Scripture as a “safe haven” where God’s people could find political security and escape the regional turmoil of Palestine:**
 1. **Abraham – sojourned in Egypt to escape famine for an indeterminate period of time before returning to the land promised by God – Genesis chapter 12.**
 2. **Joseph – was sold into slavery but rose to become governor of Egypt where he would rescue God’s people from a horrible famine in Canaan – Genesis chapters 37-47.**
 3. **Joseph, Mary and Jesus – fled to Egypt to avoid political persecution from Herod the Great – Matthew 2:13-15.**
- iii. **Wilderness – was often used to test, temper and prepare God’s chosen instruments for their ministry. Zondervan’s Encyclopedia of the Bible states – There is “the wilderness” of Beersheba (Gen 21:14) in the south of En-gedi (1 Sam 24:1); and in the East within what is later described generally in Matthew 3:1 as the wilderness of Judea. The majority of references, however, and those where the text simply has “the wilderness,” are to the desert of Sinai, in which the wanderings of Israel occurred. This covers the Sinai Peninsula and penetrates northward into Judea. To any but the true desert tribes, it must appear as a completely foreign, and exceedingly hostile environment of rock and stone. This hostility made the wilderness significant as a place where God could test His chosen, either collectively “in the day of testing in the wilderness” (cf. Pss 78; 95; 107) or individually, in an alien world where only by depending upon Him could they survive at all. At His command the wilderness could become fruitful, as Isaiah saw (chs. 32; 35; 41).**
 1. **Elijah – as Zondervan’s Encyclopedia of the Bible states “was the famous 9th cent. prophet who served in the northern kingdom in the reigns of Ahab and his son, Ahaziah. One of the outstanding heroes of the Bible, Elijah was prominent in Jewish prophetic expectations.**
 - A. **In the NT, representatives of religious officialdom were sent to question John the Baptist concerning his identity and asked him if he was Elijah (John 1:21, 25).**
 - B. **His importance in God’s plan for the ages is apparent from his predicted reappearing before “the great and terrible day of the LORD” (Mal 4:5) and from his presence with Moses and the Lord upon the Mount of Transfiguration, where the three talked about the Lord’s sacrificial death (Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36).**

- C. Elijah often is regarded as a wilderness dweller, probably because of his Trans-Jordanian connections, his directed seclusion at the brook Cherith, his identifying apparel (“a garment of haircloth, with a girdle of leather” – 2Kings 1:8), and his NT associations with John the Baptist. His simple attire and diet did not prevent him from moving in more sophisticated circles, and he had repeated opportunities to address the king in person.
 - D. Elijah was a man of great physical endurance; his feat of running before the chariot of Ahab from Mt. Carmel to the entrance of Jezreel demonstrates his excellent physical condition.
 - E. His unhesitating devotion to the Lord made him a bold spokesman for what is right; he did not turn aside from vigorous denunciation of the actions of the hostile king nor did he cringe before the fanatic opposition of the priests of Baal. The human side of Elijah is evidenced in his flight from the vindictive Jezebel, when she sent him the message that she would take his life. The combination of zealous bravery and human failure gives added weight to the power of prayer exemplified in this man of God; he was “a man of like nature 5:17, 18).
 - F. Elijah was not only an enthusiastic religious leader; he was also an ardent patriot and his energetic service for God was coupled with a sincere concern for the nation of Israel.”
2. **David – as we’ve seen above, David repeatedly retreated into the wilderness when he faced trouble where God healed, refined and refocused him. Psalm 63 could never have been written in a palace or under circumstances other than that which drove David to his knees.**
 3. **Jesus – when it came time to begin His ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness to pray and be tempted. Jesus’ Spiritual and physical fortitude had its baptism of fire in the wilderness – Luke 4:1-13.**
- iv. **J Clinton McCann, Jr speaks of wilderness testing in his book on the Theology of the Psalms – “By holding together the apparently separate moments or movements or moods, we learn both about God and ourselves. God has to do with all of life, and all of life has to do with God – even life’s worst, even a cross... God is involved; God is with us. As for us, we are simultaneously confronted and comforted – comforted again by our own finitude and fallibility and comforted by the good news of God’s faithful love and grace. The agony and the ecstasy belong together. In essence, we are people both of the cross and of the resurrection – at one and the same time.”¹ It is often in the wilderness where creation is at its rawest and wildest that we become most vulnerable... where the human will gives way to Spirit dependence, and God breaks through.**

¹ J. Clinton McCann, Jr; *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms; On Prayer and Identity*, pg 97. Abington Press; 1993