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**PSALMS in the GOSPELS**

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Hermeneutics

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## Table of Contents

Introduction to Septuagint Intertextuality .....	1
Intertextual Hermeneutics .....	1
Intertextuality in Matthew.....	3
Intertextuality in Mark .....	4
Intertextuality in Luke and John .....	5
Jesus Quotes the Psalms.....	6
Psalm Quotes in Gospel Parallels .....	7
Matthew .....	11
Mark and Luke.....	12
John.....	12
Psalms Quoted to or about Jesus in the Gospels .....	13
Psalm Quotes in all Four Gospels.....	13
Psalm Quotes in More than One Gospel.....	15
Quotes Unique to Single Gospels .....	16
Quotes not from the LXX.....	17
Why Psalm Quotes? .....	17
Psalm Context .....	17
Context Comparisons .....	18
“Pearl-Stringing” .....	19
Summary, Conclusions and Reflections.....	19
Bibliography.....	21

### *Introduction to Septuagint Intertextuality*

The purpose of this paper is to explore how Septuagint (LXX) Psalms are quoted in the Gospels, especially in parallel passages, and to determine whether their meaning in the new context is consistent with their meaning in their original setting. This is an exercise in understanding the intertextual hermeneutics of Jesus and the gospel authors. The quotes are organized according to who quoted them, with Jesus as the top priority. Quotes are studied in descending order of how many of the gospels use the same quote. For each quote, its gospel context is examined and it is traced back to its original setting among the Psalms.

### *Intertextual Hermeneutics*

Osborne offers a valuable framework for investigating the intertextual hermeneutics of Jesus and the gospel writers. The term “intertextuality” was “not used in Biblical contexts until 1989”<sup>1</sup> but has become a helpful way to look at the interplay between the Old Testament and the New. Osborne includes a summary of how to apply hermeneutical principles to intertextuality, assuring that the source and application scriptures are understood in their historical, cultural, and literary contexts. Köstenberger and Patterson offer a list of “Guidelines for Studying the use of the Old Testament in the New.”<sup>2</sup> Among them are determining the purpose of the quote and how much of its original context still applies in its new setting. Chou has reframed the discussion about the hermeneutics of the prophets and their use in the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles, saying that Jesus’ life “is the actualization of Old Testament prophecies, promises, and

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<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 331.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God’s Word: An Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 14.

theology.”<sup>3</sup> Osborne mentions that “of the eighty quotations in Matthew, thirty are from the LXX, but most occur in the direct speech of Jesus and John the Baptist, leaving the impression that Jesus used the Septuagint.”<sup>4</sup> “There is not yet scholarly consensus about the time and place of origin of the Old Greek (OG) Psalms.”<sup>5</sup> According to Albert Pietersma, “The OG Psalms as a whole closely follow the MT and all MT superscriptions are found in the LXX, although they are often expanded.”<sup>6</sup>

This current exercise in intertextuality operates within three languages (Hebrew, Greek, English) and across two genres; Psalms and Gospels. Within the Psalms are poetry, wisdom, prophecy and reverence for God’s law.

Quotes are discussed in *Gospel Synopsis*<sup>7</sup> order within each grouping. Psalms are examined in parallel Hebrew and Greek in the *Comparative Psalter*<sup>8</sup> with LXX Psalm numbers in parentheses.

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<sup>3</sup> Abner L. Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Apostles and Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 158.

<sup>4</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 323.

<sup>5</sup> Karen H. Jobes, Sr. Editor, *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2016), 175.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (German Bible Society, 1972, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> John R. Kohlenberger, III, ed., *The Comparative Psalter*, (New York / Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

### Intertextuality in Matthew<sup>9</sup>

Osborne says, “The first Gospel contains sixty quotations and numerous allusions and echoes” of the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> Menken says, “we find in his Gospel many quotations from and allusions to the Psalms.”<sup>11</sup> These vary from those clearly identified as quotes or those quoted verbatim to allusions, partial phrases and echoes. Menken addresses “all 15 Psalm quotations in Matthew.”<sup>12</sup> His interest includes probable original language source, interpretation, and similarities to and differences from other gospel citations of the same Psalm. His framework for interpretation is keyed to “first-century Judaism.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A list of Psalm quotations and allusions in Matthew follows, adapted from Steve Moyise & Maarten J.J. Menken, ed., *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 247:

Gospel	Psalm	Speaker
Matthew 3:17	Psalm 2:7	
Matthew 4:6	Psalm 91:11–12	
Matthew 4:8-9	Psalm 2:8	
Matthew 7:23	Psalm 6:9	Jesus
Matthew 10:18	Psalm 119:46	
Matthew 13:32	Psalm 104:12	Jesus
Matthew 13:35	Psalm 78:2	
Matthew 16:27	Psalm 62:13	Jesus
Matthew 21:9	Psalm 118:25–26	
Matthew 21:16	Psalm 8:3	Jesus
Matthew 21:42	Psalm 118:22–23	Jesus
Matthew 22:44	Psalm 110:1	Jesus
Matthew 23:39	Psalm 118:26	Jesus
Matthew 26:38	Psalms 42:6, 12; 43:5	Jesus
Matthew 26:64	Psalm 110:1	Jesus
Matthew 27:35	Psalm 22:19	
Matthew 27:43	Psalm 22:9	
Matthew 27:46	Psalm 22:2	Jesus

<sup>10</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 333.

<sup>11</sup> Maarten J.J. Menken, “The Psalms in Matthew’s Gospel” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Moyise & Menken, 61.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

### Intertextuality in Mark<sup>14</sup>

“Mark’s interest in the Psalms is second only to Isaiah”<sup>15</sup> “There are about 25 quotations from the Old Testament in Mark’s Gospel, of which some 22 are on the lips of Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> Five of these are from the Psalms. Moyise addresses Mark first among the gospels because he considers it the earliest of the gospels. Watts asserts that Mark “is not unaware of the original contexts and contemporary understandings of Israel’s scriptures and that these often provide hermeneutical clues”<sup>17</sup> for the gospel context. Carey goes much further, asserting that Psalm 22 is the context for the gospel, based on extensive allusions and echoes throughout.<sup>18</sup> Watts claims that “Psalm 22 then constitutes the major interpretive grid for Jesus’ death.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm quotations and allusions in Mark adapted from Moyise & Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 247:

Gospel	Psalm	Speaker
Mark 1:11	Psalm 2:7	
Mark 9:7	Psalm 2:7	
Mark 11:9-10	Psalm 118:26	
Mark 12:10-11	Psalm 118:22-23	Jesus
Mark 12:36	Psalm 110:1	Jesus
Mark 14:62	Psalm 110:1	Jesus
Mark 15:24	Psalm 22	
Mark 15:34	Psalm 22:2	Jesus

<sup>15</sup> Rikk Watts, “The Psalms in Mark’s Gospel” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Moyise & Menken, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 61.

<sup>17</sup> Watts, “The Psalms in Mark’s Gospel”, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Holly J. Carey, *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship Between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark’s Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Rikk E. Watts, “Psalms and Mark,” *Biblical Interpretation*, 15 (2007): 307-322.

# Intertextuality in Luke<sup>20</sup> and John<sup>21</sup>

Doble addresses Luke's use of Psalms, "Five of Luke's six Psalm quotations in his gospel ... are shared with Triple or Dual Traditions, leaving only his use of Ps 30:6 ... as strictly 'Lukan'."<sup>22</sup>

He describes Luke's handling of quotes and allusions as "texturing" rather than simple intertextuality.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Psalm quotations and allusions in Luke, adapted from Moyise & Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 247:

Gospel	Psalm	Speaker
Luke 3:22	Psalm 2:7	
Luke 4:6-7	Psalm 2:8	
Luke 4:10-11	Psalm 91:11-12	
Luke 13:19	Psalm 104:12	Jesus
Luke 13:27	Psalm 6:9	Jesus
Luke 13:28-9	Psalm 107:3	Jesus
Luke 13:35	Psalm 118:26	Jesus
Luke 19:38	Psalm 118:26	
Luke 20:17	Psalm 118:22	Jesus
Luke 20:42	Psalm 110:1	Jesus
Luke 23:34	Psalm 21:19	
Luke 23:36	Psalm 69:22	
Luke 23:46	Psalm 31:5	Jesus

<sup>21</sup> Psalm quotations and allusions in John, adapted from Moyise & Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 247:

Gospel	Psalm	Speaker
John 2:17	Psalm 69:10	
John 6:31	Psalm 78:24	
John 7:38	Psalm 78:16, 20	Jesus
John 10:34	Psalm 82:6	Jesus
John 12:13	Psalm 118:26	
John 13:18	Psalm 41:10	Jesus
John 15:25	Psalm 69:5	
John 19:24	Psalm 22:19	
John 19:28	Psalm 69:22	
John 19:36	Psalm 34:21	

<sup>22</sup> Peter Doble, "The Psalms in Luke-Acts" in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Moyise & Menken, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 89.

Osborne says, “The quotations in John are inherently christological in keeping with the high Christology of the book.”<sup>24</sup> “It is possible to identify six clear quotations from the Psalms in the fourth gospel.”<sup>25</sup> Four other strong allusions are also commonly agreed upon. Most Psalm quotes are not shared with the synoptic gospels. Daly-Denton says, “John shows a preference for explicit citation with a formula of quotation” unlike the synoptic authors, who “apparently intend that knowledgeable readers will pick up the reference to a Psalm”.<sup>26</sup>

### *Jesus Quotes the Psalms*

Hermeneutics has been called both art and science and a “spiritual act”.<sup>27</sup> Rather than ask whether Jesus misused scripture,<sup>28</sup> why not build the art and science of interpretation securely on the hermeneutics of Jesus? “Jesus was a Jew, and like other Jews he was brought up to believe that the Scriptures of Israel were not simply human wisdom but a gift from God.”<sup>29</sup> Assuming hermeneutics can be viewed as apprenticeship,<sup>30</sup> the best apprenticeship would certainly be to the Master. “Connecting the dots”<sup>31</sup> of Jesus’ use of the Psalms offers an understanding of how to view the quotes and helps align a modern perspective with His because the “Messiahship and lordship of Jesus constitute the fundamental reality.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 334.

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Daly-Denton, “The Psalms in John’s Gospel” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Moyise & Menken, 119.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>27</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> David I. Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 18-20.

<sup>31</sup> Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 206.

<sup>32</sup> Kieth D. Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Early Modern Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 21.



There are no details on what would most certainly be helpful examples of Jesus' hermeneutics mentioned in Luke 24:25-27 where "Jesus walked through the pertinent passages about himself."<sup>33</sup> The Greek verb διερμηνεύω translated "interpreted" or "expounded" (Lk. 24:27) "is at the root of the English word "hermeneutics."<sup>34</sup> On another occasion "He said to them, 'This is what I told you, while I was still with you, that all things which are written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me must be fulfilled.'" (Luke 24:44) These hints show that Jesus' hermeneutic is Christological<sup>35</sup> as supported by a mosaic of quotes from the Old Testament demonstrates how Jesus and the apostles handled intertextuality.<sup>36</sup> Jesus paid attention to genre in Luke 24:44, specifically mentioning the law, prophets, and psalms, although he sometimes uses the term "law" to include the entire Hebrew Bible.

#### Psalm Quotes in Gospel Parallels

In the mustard seed parable (Matt. 13:31-32, Mk. 4:30-32, Lk. 13:18-19), Jesus paraphrases Psalm 104:12a (LXX 103:12), "On them the birds of the air will roost;" (NETS) to explain the kingdom of heaven. In all three gospels the Greek of the LXX is quoted exactly for "the birds of the air" τὰ πετινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ a relatively common phrase in the Old Testament, carried into the New. The verb endings for κατασκηνώω (settle, rest) differ from the LXX and between Luke and the matching quotes in Matthew and Mark, but the vivid image of nesting hits home. In case the point might be missed, Matthew and Luke append the phrase, ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ designating the branches as the nesting place. Of all the Old Testament phrases in which the birds of the air appear, this one involving nesting is the one Jesus uses to conclude the description of the

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<sup>33</sup> Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Paige Patterson, "Ancient Rhetoric: A Model for Text-Driven Preachers" in *Text Driven Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen & Ned L. Matthews (Nashville: Baker Academic, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Please see the Scripture Index for Psalms quoted or alluded to in the Gospels.

kingdom of heaven. There was no need to include the part of the Psalm that mentions singing to evoke that image; it piggybacks along to provide a heavenly sound track.

Jesus concludes the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants by quoting Psalm 118:22-23 (RSV), “The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” Both Matthew 21:42 and Mark 12:10-11 present this long quote word for word as it appears in the LXX (117:22-23). Luke 20:17 includes only verse 22, but also verbatim from the LXX. Nowhere else does Jesus “quote an OT passage to conclude a parable.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore this quote becomes significant to anyone seeking to discern Jesus’ hermeneutic, especially timed as it is after the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple, giving it a distinctly Messianic flavor. The LXX Greek word used for “stone” is λίθος rather than the better known words in its semantic field such as πέτρος or κηφᾶς (from Aramaic), possibly because it better reflects the building material flavor from the Hebrew אבן. In Matthew and Luke Jesus explains the quote by implying that he himself is this stone which can be deadly to those who dash themselves against it or upon whom it falls. The stone metaphor would have been familiar to first-century Jews as “an open-ended challenge: it is the cornerstone for those who believe, but the stumbling stone for those who do not, whether Jew or Gentile.”<sup>38</sup> In all three synoptic gospels, the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees correctly perceive that the parable with its concluding Psalm quote applies to them and they are infuriated.

Among the most cryptic Psalms Jesus quotes is Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1) “The Lord said to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” Jesus introduces this Psalm to challenge the Pharisees regarding Messiah (Matt. 22:44, Mark 12:36,

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<sup>37</sup> Gregory R. Lanier, “The Rejected Stone in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants: Defending the Authenticity of Jesus’ Quotation of PS 118:22,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 56, Iss. 4 (2013):733-751.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Luke 20:42-43). Luke quotes the LXX almost exactly (missing only an article ὁ). Matthew and Mark change the final phrase to “put thy enemies under thy feet.” Luke’s quote of the LXX is considered a “correct translation of the Hebrew.”<sup>39</sup> The variation quoted in Matthew and Mark is attributed to “the influence of the analogous passage Ps. 8:7.”<sup>40</sup> The Greek phrase *κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου* is quoted exactly from the LXX by all three gospels with no noun for the implicit “hand” - literally “on my right” (NETS<sup>41</sup>). “Jesus points out David must have known Psalm 110:1 referred to Messiah (Matt. 22:43).”<sup>42</sup> After Jesus is arrested he uses a similar “right hand” quote (Matt. 26:64, Mk. 14:62, Lk. 22:69), perhaps alluding to the previous exchange. Gentry says, “Jesus combines Psalm 110 and Daniel 7:13 to portray the Messiah as the ruler coming to reign over the earth in a universal, worldwide, everlasting kingdom.”<sup>43</sup>

Psalm 118 is the most quoted Psalm in the gospels. Psalm 118:26a is quoted by Jesus in his “Lament over Jerusalem” (Matt 23:39 and Luke 13:35) in a very different context from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup>

Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**’ (Matt 23:38-39, RSV, Psalm 118:26a in bold)

Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**’ (Lk 13:35, RSV)

Both Matthew and Luke preface the Psalm quote with an identical lament by Jesus, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often

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<sup>39</sup> Moyise & Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 74.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint*, 199, 200.

<sup>42</sup> Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 124.

<sup>43</sup> Peter J. Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 468.

<sup>44</sup> Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 168.

would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” (Matt. 23:37, Luke 13:34). Because Luke records Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem before the triumphal entry (instead of after, as in Matthew), some say it is prophetic of that event and that it is fulfilled or partially fulfilled then.<sup>45</sup> Jesus clearly felt this emotion deeply, so it may be that this scene occurred more than once and was not recorded every time, as Moyise speculates.<sup>46</sup> Calvin agrees, saying, “those who conjecture that Christ repeated the same discourses on various occasions, I have no great objections.”<sup>47</sup>

At Gethsemane Jesus says to the disciples before praying, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death...” (Matt. 26:38, 42, Mk. 14:34). The unusual Greek word describing the state of Jesus’ soul is *περίλυπος* and is the same verb used in Psalm 42:5, 11 (LXX 41:6, 12) and 43:5, where it is prefaced with “Why?”. Presumably this context is the answer to that question. Three of the five uses of the verb are in these gospel verses. Based on this, it is considered a quote by some. Luke 22:39-46 records the scene without the quote, although the unusual verb is used to excuse the slumbering disciples. John 12:27 also records the scene without the quote and with a more conventional Greek verb for “troubled”. Scholars debate the significance of the conclusion of all three nearly identical Psalm verses, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.” (RSV) Jesus’ hermeneutic here seems Christological and hopeful despite the deep sorrow.

Jesus “cries out” words from Ps. 22:1 (LXX 21:2) on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46 and Mark 15:34). The Greek verb used in Matthew’s translation of Jesus’ cry (which Matthew records in transliterated Hebrew and Mark in Aramaic)

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<sup>45</sup> Boehmer, *Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the LORD*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture*, 399.

<sup>47</sup> Calvin, XVII, *Harmony*, vol 3, 112.

is quoted precisely from the LXX, ἐγκατέλιπές, (parsed 2sg aor act ind) translated “why did you forsake me?” in the NETS.<sup>48</sup> Mark’s Greek translation varies slightly from the LXX, but enough to cause speculation that he uses his own translation of the Aramaic. Jesus’ words as recorded in Mark are “the singular citation of the scriptures in Aramaic.”<sup>49</sup> More of this Psalm is applicable to the crucifixion context than Jesus’ short quote. The Psalm transitions to end on a triumphant note of deliverance.

### Matthew

In Matthew 10:18 Jesus says, “and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles.” Because of the key words βασιλεύς (kings) and μαρτύριον (witness/solemn declaration) this is generally accepted as alluding to Psalm 119:46 (LXX 118:46), where the same two Greek words are used, “I would also speak of your solemn charges before kings, and I was not ashamed.”<sup>50</sup> Matthew 10:17-25 offers Jesus’ longest exposition of these foretold circumstances, but parallel passage Luke 12:11-12 alludes to it without using the key words.

In Matthew 16:27 Jesus says, “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.” The end of this quote is generally considered a quote of the ending of Psalm 62:13 (61:13 LXX) “that you will repay all according to their work.” (NETS) This is within Jesus’ explanation of what it means to truly follow. All four gospels record this discussion with Jesus’ disciples but the others lack the quote.

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<sup>48</sup> Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint*, 178, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Carey, *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*, 155.

<sup>50</sup> Kohlenberger, *Comparative Psalter*, 219.

After the triumphal entry, as children continue to cry out in the temple “Hosannah...” Jesus responds to critics, “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, Have called forth your praise’?” (Matt. 21:16) The first unusual phrase is quoted exactly from the Septuagint Psalm 8:3, “ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων” also translated “infants and nursing babies” (NETS) with the second part paraphrased. The Psalm context is praise in the presence of enemies as is the gospel context.

### Mark and Luke

All of the quotes of the Psalms by Jesus in the gospel of Mark are shared with other gospels. Mark contains no Psalm quotes which are unique to this gospel, but scholars make a persuasive case for Psalm 22 as context for the Markan Passion Resurrection Narrative (PRN).<sup>51</sup>

Luke contains only one Psalm quote which is unique to this gospel. In Luke 23:46 “Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he has said this, he breathed his last.” (NIV) This is an exact quote of the first half of Psalm 31:5 (LXX 30:5) with “Father” appended as the addressee. Because of the Psalm context, many believe the second half of the Psalm verse echoes through history, “you redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.”

### John

In the gospel of John, Jesus uses quotes from Psalms 78, 82, 41, 69, and 34 which do not appear in the synoptic gospels. Teaching in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” (John 7:38, NIV) Jesus is possibly quoting Psalm 78:16, 20, although several other Old

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<sup>51</sup> Carey, *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*, 165.

Testament passages regarding water flowing from rocks may also be in view (Is. 44:3, 55:1, 58:11).

During the Feast of Dedication, in answer to the Jews' challenge to say plainly whether he is the Christ, "Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said you are gods'?" (John 10:34, quoting Psalm 82:6) The quote is exactly as written in the Septuagint (LXX 81:6).

During the last Passover supper Jesus says to the disciples, "I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'" (John 13:18, quoting Psalm 41:9, RSV) This quote is nearly identical to the Masoretic Text rather than the LXX. The visual image evoked matches the later betrayal by Judas.

In John 15:25, Jesus says, "It is to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'" The first half of Psalm 69:4 says, "More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause;" The NETS (Ps. 68:5) is nearly identical to the Masoretic Text, offering ambiguity regarding which version is quoted.

### ***Psalms Quoted to or about Jesus in the Gospels***

Second only to the intertextual hermeneutics of Jesus as examples to follow are the hermeneutics of the gospel writers as they handle the Psalms. It would not be unreasonable to wonder if the writers of the gospels consciously followed Jesus' hermeneutics in their use of the Psalms.

### **Psalm Quotes in all Four Gospels**

Possibly the most famous Psalm quote in the gospels occurs in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. "This is the only psalm quotation found *verbatim* in all four gospels."<sup>52</sup> (Psalm 118:26a)

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret Daly-Denton, in Moyise & Menken, 126, italics hers.

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,  
 “Hosanna to the Son of David! **Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD!** Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matt 21:9, NRSV; Ps 118:26a in bold)

Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,  
 “Hosanna! **Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!** Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Mark 11:9-10, NRSV; Psalm 118:26a in bold)

saying, “**Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!** Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” (Luke 19:38, NRSV; Psalm 118:26a in bold)

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,  
 “Hosanna! **Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord** – the King of Israel!” (John 12:13, NRSV; Ps 118:26a in bold)

Luke is the only one among the four gospel authors to alter the Psalm quote in any way. He preserves the exact words from the Septuagint, in their original order, but inserts the word “king.”<sup>53</sup> It is suggested that Psalm 118, “which was in the pilgrims’ minds with the approaching Feast of Passover,” would have been a natural response.<sup>54</sup> This is due to Psalm 118’s place in the “the cycle of Psalms called the Hallel ... sung at all the joyous festivals celebrated in early Judaism.”<sup>55</sup> It may seem obvious from simply reading these quotes that Jesus is being hailed as the long-promised Messiah. If more persuasion is needed, in the previous passage (Mt 20:29-34), “Jesus is thrice acclaimed Son of David,”<sup>56</sup> preparing the way for this proclamation.

All four gospels quote variations of Psalm 21:19 (22:18) about the soldiers casting lots for Jesus’ clothing, “and they divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (NETS)<sup>57</sup> Among the four gospels, the longest report of this activity is in John 19:23-

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<sup>53</sup> Boehmer, *Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the LORD*, 47.

<sup>54</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, World Biblical Commentary 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995), 596.

<sup>55</sup> Mays, *Psalms*, 362.

<sup>56</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 341.

<sup>57</sup> Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint*, 183 - 185.



25a, concluding with an exact quote of the LXX, “διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτια μου ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἱματισμὸν μου ἔβαλον κλῆρον.” The shortest is in Luke 23:34b, “And they cast lots to divide his garments.” Matt. 27:35-36 and Mark 15:24 are similar to each other, quoting of part of the LXX Psalm and adjusting tenses and other grammatical and syntactical details.<sup>58</sup>

All four gospels record the setting of Jesus’ final sip of vinegar (Matt. 27:48, Mark 15:36, Luke 23:36, John 19:29), although only John prefaces it with, “After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill scripture), “I thirst.”” (John 19:28 referencing Psalm 69:21)

### Psalm Quotes in More than One Gospel

Part of Psalm 2:7 is quoted in all three synoptic gospels, attributed to a voice from heaven, at Jesus’ baptism, “The Lord said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you.’” (NETS) Matthew 3:17 says, “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. In Mark the pronouns are different, better matching the Psalm, “And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”” (Mark 1:11, NIV) Luke 3:22b uses Mark’s exact phrasing. All three gospels use the simple phrase ὁ υἱός μου (my son) which matches the added phrase ὁ ἀγαπητός (the beloved) rather than the LXX, which lacks the article. John 1:29-34 records the scene without the quote, but with John bearing witness that “this is the son of God”.

A similar voice from heaven is reported during the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7 and Luke 9:35. All three add the phrase, “Listen to him.” John again records the scene without the quote, but with Jesus’ explanation that the voice is for the sake of the crowd, not for Jesus (Jn. 12:30).

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<sup>58</sup> Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, 317-318.

When describing the temptation of Jesus by Satan, Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11 quote Psalm 91:11-12, “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.” (NETS) This quote is a good reminder that anyone can quote scripture, even Satan, and that the purposes of the one quoting matter. In this case the hermeneutic of Jesus is displayed by quoting an appropriate verse, “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3b, ESV) in response.

### Quotes Unique to Single Gospels

Explaining the many parables of Jesus is this quote found only in Matthew, “So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”” (Matt. 13:35, Psalm 78:2)

John’s gospel records Psalm quotes not found in the synoptics. John 6:31 records this in a challenge to Jesus, “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” (Psalm 78:24) The context here brings to mind Jesus’ response to Satan that man does not live by bread alone (Deut. 8:3b) and the declaration that he himself is the bread of life.

“He hoped in the Lord; let him rescue him; let him save him, because he wanted him.” (Matt. 27:43) NETS Psalm 21:9 (22:8) “Matthew puts these words in the mouths of the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocking Jesus on the cross.”<sup>59</sup>

John 19:36 quotes Psalm 33:21 (34:20) “The Lord will guard all their bones; not one of them will be crushed.” (NETS)<sup>60</sup> as fulfillment of prophecy. The unusual prophetic Greek verb is συντριβήσεται meaning to break, crush or bruise.

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<sup>59</sup> Jobes, *Discovering the Septuagint*, 180, 184, 185.

### *Quotes not from the LXX*

Osborne's observation that "of the eighty quotations in Matthew, thirty are from the LXX"<sup>61</sup>, leaves fifty which are not.

Among the most puzzling verses in the gospels is Jesus' quote of part of Psalm 6:9 (MT 6:8), "Depart from me, all you workers of evil; for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping." in Matthew 7:23 and Luke 13:27. This quote is one of the few that is closer to the Masoretic Text than the LXX.

### *Why Psalm Quotes?*

The Psalter is a good place to start the process of aligning modern hermeneutics with the hermeneutics of Jesus and the writers of the gospels, because it has been called "one of the most spacious and well-traveled pathways into Scripture".<sup>62</sup> The Psalms are the worship lyrics of the Old Testament. It seems particularly interesting to see how they are quoted in the New Testament, especially by Jesus. These quotes offer a Christological lens through which to view intertextuality.

The "book of Psalms is – together with Isaiah – the most extensively used Old Testament book in the New Testament."<sup>63</sup> The Psalms tend to be less prophetic than Isaiah, giving their quotes a flavor of worship even when expressing prophecy.

### *Psalm Context*

The Psalms are notoriously difficult to date, having been compiled from "various periods of Israel's history"<sup>64</sup> and completed between 400 and 200 BC.<sup>65</sup> The Septuagint translation of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 192, 195.

<sup>61</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 323.

<sup>62</sup> Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Moyise & Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 2.

Psalms may be considered “a repository of textual variants to the Masoretic Text” or “the oldest ‘commentary’ on the Hebrew Bible”<sup>66</sup> because the Hebrew Bible is widely believed to have been translated from Hebrew to Greek between 285 BC and the first Century AD. The Psalms were translated towards the later end of that time, while the Psalms in Hebrew were “in the process of being standardized.”<sup>67</sup> Because of Jewish liturgical use, one can safely assume that the Psalms were well enough known by first century listeners that it was not necessary for Jesus or the gospel writers to quote entire Psalms, but only to use portions, headlines or punch lines or in some cases just key words to evoke recall of a whole verse or even a whole Psalm.

Among the questions asked by some scholars of the text is whether quotes are taken out of context. When examining the quotes with the purpose of understanding the hermeneutics of the quoters, that question becomes moot.

### *Context Comparisons*

Jesus and the gospel writers “were always faithful to the original text.”<sup>68</sup> Any new “meanings were always aware of the original and built on it.”<sup>69</sup> It may be that the context from which each Psalm was quoted or paraphrased provides additional background for its new intertextual setting. An example might be Jesus’ quote of Psalm 6:9, which would offer a different tone than one usually hears preached. Silva asserts, “The principle of contextual interpretation is, at least in

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<sup>64</sup> W. Stewart McCullough, *Psalms and Proverbs*. Interpreter’s Bible IV (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> John R. Kohlenberger, III, ed., *The Comparative Psalter*, (New York / Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), x.

<sup>67</sup> Maarten J. J. Menken, *Matthew’s Bible* (Leuven University Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>68</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 329.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

theory, one of the few universally accepted hermeneutical guidelines.”<sup>70</sup> Silva further claims that the term “context” “must be interpreted in the broadest sense possible”.<sup>71</sup>

### ***“Pearl-Stringing”***

Gathering pearls of wisdom found in the Psalms and quoted by Jesus and the writers of the gospels is a healthy training activity for serious students, teachers and preachers of the Bible. If Jesus chose specific “pearls”<sup>72</sup> how does the string of pearls look to modern readers? We can see that “there is both faithfulness to the original and a transformation of it in its new context.”<sup>73</sup> As one wades through the many techniques and pseudo-scientific approaches to scripture, it is essential to keep a rule like Irenaeus’ “rule of truth” or “rule of faith”<sup>74</sup> always front and center while gathering and stringing pearls.

### ***Summary, Conclusions and Reflections***

It is interesting to see which Psalms among 150 are quoted in the gospels and by whom and in what context. Based on the selection of Psalms Jesus quotes, his hermeneutic is securely Christological, presenting himself as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy and the culmination of scripture. Jesus paints a picture of heaven as a wonderful destination for those who embrace him. His use of Psalm quotes to show that those who oppose him are the enemies of God and will ultimately be defeated is equally persuasive. Even the quoted Psalms which express immediate sorrow and despair have triumphant endings glorifying God in their original context.

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<sup>70</sup> Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning*, 516.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 525.

<sup>72</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 376.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>74</sup> O’Keefe and Reno, *Sanctified Vision*, 119.

The hermeneutics of the gospel writers are, if possible, more Christological than Jesus' based on the Psalms they quote concerning Jesus. Jesus is clearly presented as the long awaited Messiah.

If a goal in pursuing this study were to design devotional materials based on the Psalms in the gospels this would be entirely achievable based on the previous pages. Jesus' hermeneutic and that of the gospel writers in their quoting of the Psalms offer much to enhance the devotional life of any Christian and to bring everyone closer to a daily Spirit-filled life regardless of circumstances.

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