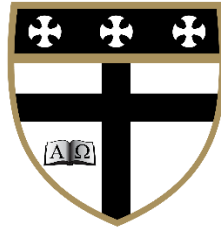


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## A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“3<sup>rd</sup> & 41<sup>st</sup> Psalms of David: A Prologue to the New Testament”<sup>1</sup>

by

Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D., LL.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). [www.roderickford.org](http://www.roderickford.org).

# **“3<sup>rd</sup> & 41<sup>st</sup> Psalms of David: A Prologue to the New Testament” (Part Four)<sup>2</sup>**

by

Roderick O. Ford, D.Litt. (Law & Religion)



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<sup>2</sup> Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). [www.roderickford.org](http://www.roderickford.org).

## A Foreword on the Book of Psalms

Jesus Christ himself explained that his ministry had been prophesied in the Book of Psalms.<sup>3</sup> The prophecy of King David is also recorded in the Book of Psalms. There are 150 psalms written in that book. It is not clear as to whether David wrote or contributed to the creation of all of these psalms. One position holds that David himself only wrote about 73 of these 150 psalms. While another position—that of Reformed theology—holds that David wrote all 150 of the psalms. For instance, Augustine of Hippo held this later position in *The City of God*, stating that:

But those seem to me to hold the more credible opinion, who ascribe to him the authorship of all these hundred and fifty psalms, and think that he prefixed to some of them the names even of other men, who prefigured something pertinent to the matter, but chose to have no man's name in the titles of the rest, just as God inspired him in the management of this variety, which, although dark, is not meaningless.<sup>4</sup>

Here, Augustine pointed out that “the Savior Himself” ascribed Psalm 110 to the authorship of David, even though the caption to this Psalm reads “Of David. A psalm.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Augustine, King David's prophecies are contained within the 150 psalms.<sup>6</sup> Augustine surmised that, given David's natural talents and musical gifts, his prophecies were naturally transmitted through psalms. “Now David was a man skill in songs, who clearly loved musical harmony, not with a vulgar delight, but with a believing disposition, and by it served his God, who is the true God, by the mystical representation of a great thing. For the rational and well-ordered

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Luke 24:44 (“He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”)

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 595.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* See, also, Psalm 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 602 (“...about the Psalms, that is, about King David's prophecy...”); p. 595 (“... almost all his prophecy is in psalms, of which a hundred and fifty are contained in what we call the Book of Psalms....”)

concord of diverse sounds in harmonious variety suggests the compact unity of the well-ordered city.”<sup>7</sup>

But Augustine’s viewpoint ascribing the authorship of the entire 150 psalms to David is partly called into question by the historical record contained in I Chronicles, whereby King David is described as setting aside dozens of men for the ministry of prophesying through musical instruments, as follows:

David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service:

2 From the sons of *Asaph*:

Zakkur, Joseph, Nethaniah and Asarelah. The sons of Asaph were under the supervision of Asaph, who prophesied under the king’s supervision.

3 As for *Jeduthun*, from his sons:

Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei,[a] Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six in all, under the supervision of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the Lord.

4 As for *Heman*, from his sons:

Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael and Jerimoth; Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romanti-Ezer; Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir and Mahazioth.

5 (All these were sons of Heman the king’s seer. They were given him through the promises of God to exalt him. God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.)

6 All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the Lord, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 595.

ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king.

7 Along with their relatives—all of them trained and skilled in music for the Lord—they numbered 288.<sup>8</sup>

But St. Augustine here explains that where Asaph, Jeduthun, Heman and others may have “prefigured something pertinent to the matter” of specific psalms, David “prefixed to some” of the psalms “the names even of other men.”<sup>9</sup> A careful review of the several inscriptions that are affixed to the Psalms seemingly support—or, at least, they do not refute—Augustine’s position, because these inscriptions are not consistent or clear, and they give no clear indication as to authorship.<sup>10</sup>

In Christian and Reformed hermeneutics, it has long been held that the Book of Psalms contains prophetic descriptions or predictions of Jesus Christ and his Church. This paper explores those prophetic descriptions and predictions that are contained within the book of Psalms.

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<sup>8</sup> I Chronicles 25: 1-7.

<sup>9</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 595.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in some the inscriptions which appear before the Psalms we find, e.g., “For the director of music. A psalm of David”; “Of David. A makil.”; “Of David”; “For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD.”; “A psalm of David. A petition.”; “For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David.”; “For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil.”; “For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.”; “A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah.”

## Introduction

A review of the Psalms can be challenging because, as poetry, it often utilizes language, similes, metaphors, and gerunds that can be open to more than one meaning. Here we find two great theologians—John Calvin (1509 – 1564) and Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD) taking two different theological and hermeneutical approaches to the interpretation of Psalms 3 and 41.

For this reason, this paper demonstrates why the word “Reformed” in Reformed theology should not be restricted to the personal preferences of only one single theologian— not even that of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Besa, Baxter, or others— but, instead, that a plurality of theological views from within the “Reformed” tradition, should be consulted, together with the text and symmetry of the Scriptures.

My own hermeneutical rule of thumb is that when Christians read the Book of Psalms, they should always endeavor to find Christ himself within them, because the psalms were published with the specific objective of functioning as prophecy—musical prophecy.

For this reason, this paper adopts Augustine of Hippo’s prophetic interpretation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm as being a prophecy of the *crucifixion, death, and resurrection* of Jesus Christ, and it rejects John Calvin’s literal and historical interpretation of that passage of Scripture.<sup>11</sup>

Since the Book of Psalms is prophecy, and not history, Augustine’s prophetic interpretation seems more plausible than Calvin’s more conservative, literal, and historical interpretations.

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<sup>11</sup> Having thus seen how the great Reformed theologian John Calvin (1509 – 1564)’s has sometimes conflicted with that of Augustine of Hippo’s allegorical and prophetic interpretations of Scripture, the undersigned has sought to reconcile the conflict, or to ascertain whether one side or the other has a more authoritative biblical foundation or a more sound Scriptural support.

## Chapter One:

### “Psalm 3- Verses 1 through 2 (and Psalm 41)”

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is a prophetic description of Christ’s passion— of his trial and crucifixion on Good Friday, as well of his Resurrection from the dead.

#### Passion and Crucifixion of Christ

In Verses 1 and 2 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, we find a description by King David of his enemies, stating:

**“O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!**

**Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him.’”**

In Verses 7 through 9 of the 41<sup>st</sup> Psalm, we find the following similar description, to wit:

**“All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying ‘A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.’**

**Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared by bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”**

John Calvin has given these passages of Scripture a very literal and historical interpretation, stating, with respect to Psalm 3, Verses 1 and 2, that “[s]acred history teaches that David was not only dethroned, but forsaken by almost all men; so that he had well nigh as many enemies as he had subjects.”<sup>12</sup> And, with respect to Psalm 41, Verses 7 through 9, that these are only historical or literal descriptions of King David’s personal experiences, with no other allegorical or prophetic references.

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<sup>12</sup> John Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Bible* (Psalm 3). <https://sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc08/cc08008.htm#:~:text=With%20my%20voice%20have%20I,the%20midst%20of%20his%20distresses.>

Calvin does conclude, allegorically, that King David's consternation demonstrates a sort of faith in the LORD that all faithful saints, even today, may immolate, stating, "certainly the only remedy for allaying *our fears* is this, to *cast upon him all the cares which trouble us*; as, on the other hand, those who have the conviction that they are not the objects of his regard, must be prostrated and overwhelmed by the calamities which befall them."<sup>13</sup>

But otherwise, Calvin does not provide any references of these two passages of Scripture, viz, Psalms 3 and 41, as conveying any prophetic references to Christ and his passion. This is surprising that we find no prophetic interpretation in Calvin. Most Christian theologians have accepted, for instance, Psalm 41 as a prophetic prediction of Christ's betrayal and passion.<sup>14</sup>

However, Augustine of Hippo goes much further than John Calvin in that, according to Augustine, the whole 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and the whole 41<sup>st</sup> Psalm are indeed prophetic interpretations of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

For instance, regarding the words in Psalm 41:9 – "**Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared by bread, has lifted up his heel against me**" – we find several direct references in the New Testament in the four Gospels. For example, Jesus's betrayal is recorded in Matthew 26: 20-25, to wit:

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., "**Jesus Was Betrayed by a Friend**," [http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/psalm\\_41\\_9.htm](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/psalm_41_9.htm)

"Bible passage: Psalm 41:9

"Prophet: David

"Written: About 1000 BC

"Many of the Bible's Psalms, which were written before the time of Jesus, contain details that foreshadowed events in the life of Jesus. In Psalm 41, for example, **the psalmist wrote of being betrayed by a friend, someone close enough to have shared food with him (verse 9). This foreshadowed something that happened later with Jesus.** As explained in Matthew 26:47-50, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of the 12 apostles, shortly after Jesus and the apostles had shared bread during the Last Supper."

<sup>15</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1950), pp. 600 – 602. ("Of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 41<sup>st</sup>... Psalms, in which the death and resurrection of the Lord are prophesied").



And while they were eating, he said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.’

They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, ‘Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?’

Jesus replied, ‘The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.’

Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, ‘Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?’

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

And, again, regarding the words in Psalm 3:2— **“Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him’”** — and the words in Psalm 41:7— **“All my enemies whisper together against me”** — we may readily observe being prophetically fulfilled in the Gospel of St. Matthew, to wit:

“[T]hey divided up his clothes by casting lots....”<sup>16</sup>

“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads.”<sup>17</sup>

“[S]ave yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”<sup>18</sup>

“[T]he chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.... He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 27: 35.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 27: 39.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 27: 40.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 27: 41-42.

“In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.”<sup>20</sup>

“They... mocked him. ‘Hail king of the Jews!’”<sup>21</sup>

Hence, according to Augustine of Hippo, the words, “**All my enemies whisper together against me, ‘God will not deliver him,’**” which are spoken in the second seventh of the 41<sup>st</sup> Psalm, are prophetically ascribed to the very words spoken by the non-believers who mocked Jesus of Nazareth during his passion and crucifixion.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 27: 43.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 27:29.

<sup>22</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 600 (referencing Psalm 41:7, which states: “My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die and his name perish?... All my enemies whisper together against me... saying ... he will never get up from the place where he lies.’”) See, also, Matthew 26 through 27; Mark 11 through 15; Luke 22 through 23; and John 18 through 19.

## Chapter Two: “Psalm 3- Verses 3 through 8 (and Psalm 41)”

The remaining verses of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm denote Christ’s resurrection following his persecution, passion, and death on the cross.

The words, **“I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me,”** in Verse 5 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm has been ascribed to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, the passage in Psalm 41, Verse 8, which states, **“he will never get up from the place where he lies,”** is a cryptic, indirect reference to this same prophetic event.

Augustine of Hippo has interpreted these passages in Psalms 3 and 41 to mean the passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ. For, says Augustine of Hippo, “[i]s there perchance any one so stupid as to believe that the prophet chose to point it out to us as something great that He had slept and risen up, unless that sleep had been death, and that awaking the resurrection, which behooved to be thus prophesied concerning Christ?”<sup>24</sup>

And yet, Reformed theologian John Calvin opted to give this passage of Scripture *only* an historical reference to an utterance by King David, describing how David— *but not Christ*—had been able to sleep soundly amidst all of his trials and tribulations.<sup>25</sup>

To be sure, Calvin does not explicitly reject Augustine’s prophetic interpretation of Verse 5 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, but, significantly, Calvin does not even acknowledge, in his commentary on Verse 5, this prophetic reference to Christ’s resurrection.

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<sup>23</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 600.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Bible* (Psalm 3). <https://sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc08/cc08008.htm#:~:text=With%20my%20voice%20have%20I,the%20midst%20of%20his%20distresses.>

But Augustine goes so far, on the other hand, to utilize, inter alia, Verse 5 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm to refute the Jews' argument that the Messiah would not die and not be resurrected.

In making this refutation of the Jews' argument, Augustine contradicts (or disagrees with) John Calvin's more literal-grammatical-historical interpretation<sup>26</sup> of Verse 5 as well, where Augustine states:

[T]he Jews do not expect that the Christ whom they expect will die; therefore they do not think ours to be Him whom the law and the prophets announced, but feign to themselves I know not whom of their own, exempt from the suffering of death. Therefore, with **wonderful emptiness and blindness**, they contend that the words we have set down signify, **not death and resurrection**, but **sleep and awaking again**.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas, we are instructed to read a prophetic interpretation into the Psalms, because they were designed to be musical prophecy (see, e.g., I Chronicles 25:1 describing the psalms as being “for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals”); and *whereas* Christ himself ascribed to the psalms a prophetic foretelling of his own life and ministry,<sup>28</sup> we must see that Augustine of Hippo is not engaged in any usurpation of Scriptural authority when he ascribes a “prophetic” interpretation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

For the Psalms are indeed “the ministry of prophesying,” and so, naturally, one should ascertain, when reading the Psalms, if there is a prophetic meaning—and this, St. Augustine has done.

Therefore, with rejecting the literal and historical interpretation ascribed the Jews and Calvin, this paper concludes that Augustine of Hippo's prophetic

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<sup>26</sup> The subtitle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm reads, “**A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom,**” and so this subtitle certainly lends some credence to the literal or historical hermeneutical interpretation given by the Jews and by John Calvin.

<sup>27</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 601.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Luke 24:44 (“He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”)

interpretation Verse 5 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is more authoritative and reasonable— the Book of Psalms not being history, but *musical prophecy*.

## CONCLUSION

The Book of Psalms is a prophecy— King David’s prophecy on the spiritual meaning of his own kingdom and of the future eternal kingdom of the Messiah.

Jesus of Nazareth has ascribed this Book of Psalms to be a prophetic foretelling of his own life and ministry. His passion and crucifixion being thus prophesied therein,<sup>29</sup> and no other king of Judah or Israel having fulfilled his prophecy.<sup>30</sup>

In the 3rd and 41<sup>st</sup> Psalms, we find a prophetic description of the passion and resurrection of the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ.

This is especially demonstrated in Psalm 3, Verse 5, which say, **“I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.”** Augustine of Hippo has described this passage of Scripture to be one of “the oracles of the Psalms” regarding “His resurrection.”<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion, this Paper also suggests that the word “Reformed” not be restricted to the personal preferences of only one single theologian— not even that of Augustine, Calvin, Besa, Baxter, or others— but, instead, that a plurality of theological views from within the “Reformed” tradition, should be consulted, together with the text and symmetry of the Scriptures.

THE END

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix, below.

<sup>31</sup> St. Augustine, The City of God, supra, p. 600.

# Appendix

## THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

<b>Saul</b>	1050-1010 BC
<b>David</b>	1010-970
<b>Solomon</b>	970-930

Judah (and Benjamin)					Israel (Ten Northern Tribes)				
King	Reign		Character	Prophets	King	Reign		Character	Prophets
<b>1. Rehoboam</b>	931-913	17 years	Bad	Shemaiah	<b>1. Jeroboam I</b>	931-910	22 years	Bad	Ahijah
<b>2. Abijah</b>	913-911	3 years	Bad		<b>2. Nadab</b>	910-909	2 years	Bad	
<b>3. Asa</b>	911-870	41 years	Good		<b>3. Baasha</b>	909-886	24 years	Bad	
					<b>4. Elah</b>	886-885	2 years	Bad	
					<b>5. Zimri</b>	885	7 days	Bad	
					<b>6. Omri</b>	885-874*	12 years	Bad	Elijah Micaiah
<b>4. Jehoshaphat</b>	870-848*	25 years	Good		<b>7. Ahab</b>	874-853	22 years	Bad	
<b>5. Jehoram</b>	848-841*	8 years	Bad		<b>8. Ahaziah</b>	853-852	2 years	Bad	
<b>6. Ahaziah</b>	841	1 years	Bad		<b>9. Joram</b>	852-841	12 years	Bad	Elisha
<b>7. Athaliah</b>	841-835	6 years	Bad		<b>10. Jehu</b>	841-814	28 years	Bad	
<b>8. Joash</b>	835-796	40 years	Good	Joel	<b>11. Jehoahaz</b>	814-798	17 years	Bad	
<b>9. Amaziah</b>	796-767	29 years	Good		<b>12. Jehoash</b>	798-782	16 years	Bad	Jonah Amos Hosea
<b>10. Uzziah (Azariah)</b>	767-740*	52 years	Good		<b>13. Jeroboam II</b>	782-753*	41 years	Bad	
<b>11. Jotham</b>	740-732*	16 years	Good	Isaiah Micah	<b>14. Zechariah</b>	753-752	6 mo	Bad	
<b>12. Ahaz</b>	732-716	16 years	Bad		<b>15. Shallum</b>	752	1 mo	Bad	
<b>13. Hezekiah</b>	716-687	29 years	Good		<b>16. Menahem</b>	752-742	10 years	Bad	
<b>14. Manasseh</b>	687-642*	55 years	<a href="#">Bad/Repented</a>	Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah	<b>17. Pekahiah</b>	742-740	2 years	Bad	
<b>15. Amon</b>	642-640	2 years	Bad		<b>18. Pekah</b>	740-732*	20 years	Bad	

<b>16. Josiah</b>	640-608	31 years	Good		<b>19. Hoshea</b>	732-712	9 years	Bad	
<b>17. Jehoahaz</b>	608	3 mo	Bad		722 BC Fall of Samaria to Assyria				
<b>18. Jehoiakim</b>	608-597	11 years	Bad	Daniel Ezekiel Jeremiah	* Co-regency				
<b>19. Jehoiachin</b>	597	3 mos	Bad						
<b>20. Zedekiah</b>	597-586	11 years	Bad						
Destruction of Jerusalem, 9th Av, 586 BC, Babylonian Captivity									

### The Last Five Kings of Judah

<b>1. Josiah</b> Reigned 31 years (640-609 BC)		
<b>2. Jehoahaz (Shallum)</b> Reigned 3 months (609 BC) Taken prisoner to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco	<b>3. Jehoiakim (Eliakim)</b> Reigned 11 years (609-598 BC) Died in Jerusalem	<b>5. Zedekiah</b> Reigned 11 years (597--586 BC) Taken prisoner to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar
<b>4. Jehoichin (Jeconiah, Coniah)</b> Reigned 3 months (December 9, 598 - March 16, 597 BC) Taken prisoner to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (with Ezekiel)		



