

Psalms

“A Model for Praise and Prayer”

I. Introduction to Psalms

A. It may be impossible to adequately introduce the Book of Psalms

1. It is where theology meets human experience.
 - a. The Psalms are filled with the highest praise, sung from the deepest valleys of life's most difficult challenges.
 - b. In the Psalms we find man's greatest turmoil meets with God's greatest promises.
 - i. From the deepest pit, to praise-filled solid ground
Psalm 40:1-3 "To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth--Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD."
 - c. No matter the depth of emotion you may be facing, you will find within the Psalms a promise to lift your head and minister to your need.
 - i. Not just a promise, but a promise spoken from real life experiences and a promise that has been time-tested for almost 3,000 years.
 - d. The Psalms address the full range of human emotion. We will encounter joy, sorrow, desperation, anger, vengeance, praise, thankfulness, and much more.
 - e. It has been said, the Book of Psalms provides guidance for the believer's emotions, just as other Scripture provides guidance for faith and action.
 - i. Like medicine for the soul of men.
 - f. The Psalms are real and honest outpourings of emotion in the form of praise and prayer.
 - i. It is common to find a wide range of emotion in a single Psalm.
 - ii. Some begin in anguish and end in praise.
 1. Psalm 13:1-2, 5-6
 - g. John Calvin said . . ."for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties – in short, all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed – the Holy Ghost hath here represented to the life."

B. The Psalms have played an important role throughout history.

1. They were used in Temple worship
 - a. Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120 through 134) were sung as caravans approached Jerusalem for feasts.
 - b. Psalm 33 was sung as the ascended the steps of the Temple
 - c. Psalms 98 and 101 were sung to begin every month
 - d. Psalm 92 was sung every Sabbath
2. They were read and sung as part of Synagogue worship
3. Every church used psalms to worship the Lord and encourage the saints.
 - a. James 5:13 Worship
 - b. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 Encouragement
4. The Psalms are the most quoted of all the Old Testament books.
 - a. Of the 283 direct old testament quotes in the New Testament, 116 are from the Psalms
 - b. It is safe to say, Psalms is the song book of the New Testament.

C. Perhaps the greatest value of the Psalms is in the private devotional life of the believer.

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1. They are like a treasure chest filled with the precious gems of sympathy, comfort, reassurance and guidance.
 2. No matter what trial you are facing, you will find help in the Psalms.
 3. The circumstances in which they were penned include:
 - a. Fleeing from enemies – Psalm 3
 - b. Losing a child – Psalm 9
 - c. Being rescued from death – Psalm 18
 - d. After faltering in faith – Psalm 34
 - e. After moral failure – Psalm 51
 - f. Upon being betrayed – Psalm 54
 - g. As a prisoner of war – Psalm 56
 - h. Living homeless – Psalm 57
 - i. After a great victory – Psalm 60
 4. These were real life experiences, not theoretical.
- D. The Psalms prove to be a great source of encouragement today.
1. The Pastors and Elders at CCVB shared the following psalms as a source of their counsel and encouragement.
 - a. Many referred to Psalm 23. One said “If God is my shepherd I will not be in need of anything.”
 - b. Others chose Psalm 32:8. “This keeps my focus on where to look for instruction.”
 - c. Another chose Psalm 139:7. “Everything we do is in His sight. He watches because He loves us.”
 - d. Another chose Psalm 37:3-7. “This has become a life verse. It is based upon waiting on the Lord.”
 - e. Another, Psalm 51. “Reminds me to turn quickly from sin.”
 - f. Another, Psalm 19:14. “The prayer of my life.”
 - g. And finally, Psalm 34:18. “How we receive His grace and mercy.”

II. Background Information

- A. The Book of Psalms is the largest book in the Bible.
1. It is actually a collection of 150 songs, written by at least seven different writers, over a period of 7,000 years.
 - a. Contributors include:

Moses	1 psalm
David	73 psalms
Asaph	12 psalm's
Korak's sons	10 psalms
Solomon	2 psalms
Heman	1 psalm
Ethan	1 psalm
 - b. Making a total of 100 “signed” by the author songs. Fifty psalms are anonymous and are often referred to as the “orphan psalms”.
 - c. The author or situation of the psalm is not nearly as important as the content.
 2. It seems likely; the Psalms were compiled by David, who placed a major emphasis on worship.
 - a. He is called the “Sweet Psalmist of Israel.”
 - b. He wrote almost half of the Psalms, three quarters of which he signed
 - c. He gathered musicians around the tabernacle so worship music was always played.

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- d. Ezra is credited with compiling them in their present form.
- 3. The Psalms are divided into five books, but any attempt to explain the five divisions falls short.
 - a. All we know is that these divisions date back to antiquity
 - b. Not knowing the “why or how” of these divisions in no way limits your understanding of the Psalms.
- B. Psalms gets its name from the Anglicized form of the Greek word “Psalmos”, which means to pluck and refers to a song accompanied by a musical instrument.
 - 1. Fifty-five Psalms are addressed to the Chief Musician or Band Leader.
 - 2. In addition to stringed instruments Psalms refers to the use of
 - a. Wind instruments, including flute
 - b. Trumpets
 - c. Percussion
 - d. And most important of all, loud and joyful shouts of praise (Psalm 150:6)
 - 3. It is interesting that no melodies have survived.
 - a. Style varies, content remains the same.
 - b. Psalm 22 set to “Deer of the Dawn”
We have no idea what that song sounded. Perhaps it was “blue grass”
- C. Central to Psalms
 - 1. The central person of the Psalms is God
 - 2. The central message of the Psalms is: Praise through Prayer. One man called it “When sighing becomes singing.”

III. Outline of the Psalms

- A. Since the Psalms are a collection of 150 individual worship songs, an outline serves little value to the study. Instead, we can group Psalms together based on subject matter.
 - 1. Psalm 120 – 134 Psalms of Ascent
 - a. These were sung in happy anticipation as the caravans climbed the hills of Judea, leading the way to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual feasts.
 - 2. Psalms 146 – 150 Hallelujah Psalms
 - a. These all begin with hallelujah or the English, “praise the Lord”
 - b. A number of other Psalms begin the same way, including Psalms 111 – 113.
 - 3. Another group of Psalms are referred to as the “Imprecatory Psalms”
 - a. Imprecate means to curse.
 - b. In these Psalms the writer is calling on God to defend him against his enemies.
 - c. Eighteen Psalms have this quality.
 - d. Psalm 58:6 – 8 “Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! Let them flow away as waters which run continually; when he bends his bow, let his arrows be as if cut in pieces. Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes, like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun.
 - ii. It is important to keep in mind that these are expressions from a grieving hearts and do not form Biblical doctrine.
 - iii. In Psalm 58:11 David explains his plea. “So that men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth.”

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IV. Types of Christ

- A. Forty percent of all Old Testament quotes in the New Testament come from the Psalms and the Psalms speak often and explicitly concerning Christ.
 - 1. Jesus drew our attention to what the Psalms had to say about Him
 - a. Luke 24:44 “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”
- B. The Psalms address the nature of Christ
 - 1. Deity – have the nature of God
 - 2. Psalm 2:7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and speaks of His deity as the Son of God.
 - 3. Psalm 45:6 – 7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:8 – 9 and speaks to His deity as God
- C. The Psalms also prophetically address the work of Christ.
 - 1. His rejection Psalm 118:22, quoted by Peter in reference to Christ in 1 Peter 2:7
 - 2. His betrayal, Psalm 41:9, spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 26:23 - 24
 - 3. His death
 - a. Psalm 22 – Keep in mind this was written 900 years before Christ
 - i. Verse 1 Jesus draws our attention to the Psalm by quoting it from the cross
 - ii. Verse 7 – 8 Jesus is ridiculed, “Come down from the cross . . .”
 - iv. Verse 14 – 15 Physical description of death on the cross
 - v. Verse 16 Pierced hands and feet
 - vi. Verse 17 No broken bones
 - vii. Verse 18 Gamble for garments
 - 4. His resurrection Psalm 16:10, quoted in Acts 2:27
 - 5. His ascension Psalm 68:18, quoted in Ephesians 4:8
 - 6. His return to reign Psalm 110:1, quoted in Acts 2:34 – 35
- D. The most essential doctrines of Christology (the study of Christ) are all prophetically presented in the Psalms.

V. Favorite Psalms

- A. Psalm 1 Guidance
- B. Psalm 23 Comfort
- C. Psalm 37 Direction in Life
- D. Psalm 51 Forgiveness and restoration
- E. Psalm 61 Help in Trouble
- F. Psalm 139 Presence of the Lord
- G. Psalm 119 Exalting the Word

- H. Pastor Jim’s favorite: The one I find myself returning to most often for help is Psalm 91. Particularly verse 7 in light of verses 1 & 2.

Verse 1 “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Verse 2 “I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.’”

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Verse 7 “A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.”