

Old Testament Survey

Psalms

Psalms - Introduction

- “Psalm” (Greek: *psalmos* - "song" or "plucking" [a stringed instrument])
- Hebrew title: *Tehillim* ("praises")
- Collection of praises and prayers of the people of God
 - "the hymnbook of ancient Israel"

Psalms - Introduction

- Not just human songs, but ones inspired by God
 - not just Man's words, but God's Word
- Show us how to relate to God through the spectrum of human life and experience
 - Speak of who God is, and who we are in relation to Him
 - Teach us how to speak with God in a way that honors Him

Psalms - Structure

- Comprised of ~150 individual psalms
 - several Psalms may originally have been single poems
 - e.g. Psalm 9 & 10 - form a single acrostic
 - e.g. Psalm 42 & 43 - recurring refrain (42:5,11; 43:5)

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God.”

Psalms - Structure

- divided into 5 books
 - perhaps reflecting the 5 books of the Law of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy)
 - Book I - Psalm 1-41
 - Book II - Psalm 42-72
 - Book III - Psalm 73-89
 - Book IV - Psalms 90-106
 - Book V - Psalms 107-150
 - each book ends with a doxology

Psalms - Structure

- divided into 5 books
 - dating of the books not entirely certain
 - compiled and arranged over time
 - books I & II may have been earlier, with III-V coming later
 - final form some time in the post-exilic period
 - before the Septuagint translation (3rd to 2nd century BC)

Psalms - Structure

- Psalms 1 & 2 form an introduction to the book
 - Psalm 1
 - importance of meditating on God's Law
 - portrait of the righteous man
 - living in obedience to and under the blessing of God, in contrast to the wicked
 - life as it was meant to be – a picture of the Garden of Eden
 - “He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season...” (1:3)*

Psalms - Structure

- Psalms 1 & 2 form an introduction to the book
 - Psalm 2
 - a portrait of the sovereign rule of God and His Anointed One
 - unassailable dominion over all the earth
 - futility of human rebellion
 - a call to submission

Psalms - Structure

- Concludes with 5 exuberant psalms of praise
 - Psalms 146-150
 - each begins and ends with *Hallelujah* ("Praise the LORD")
 - a summary of our 'chief end' as God's people
 - a summary of the reasons why we praise God

Psalms – Authorship & Historical Context

- historical context of a few psalms indicated in the psalm itself
 - e.g. Psalm 137 - "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.... For there our captors required of us songs..." (v.1,3) - a psalm of the Exile

Psalms – Authorship & Historical Context

- "superscriptions" (or titles) of psalms
 - present in most psalms (~3/4)
 - provide some information about
 - author and/or
 - context in which the psalm was written
 - e.g. Psalm 51: "To the Choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet Went to Him, After He Had Gone in to Bathsheba"

Psalms – Authorship & Historical Context

- "superscriptions" (or titles) of psalms
 - Some areas of uncertainty/disagreement
 - Do the titles always indicate the author?
 - "Of David" - could possibly also be translated "by David", "about David", or "for David"
 - Are they original/canonical?
 - some appear in the earliest available manuscripts
 - others appear to have been added later

Psalms – Authorship & Historical Context

- composed by multiple authors, over ~1000 years (from Moses to exilic/post-exilic)
 - David – 73 psalms attributed to David
 - Asaph (one of David's choir leaders; 1 Chr. 16:5) – 12
 - The sons of Korah (members of Levitical choir) - 11
 - Solomon - 2
 - Heman (associate of Asaph) - 1
 - Etan (Ethan) - 1
 - Moses - 1

Types of Psalms

- Internal classification
 - different types of psalms suggested by the superscriptions of some Psalms
 - e.g. Psalm 16 - "A miktam of David"
 - Psalm 32 - "A maskil of David"
 - etc.
 - The meaning of some of these terms is uncertain

Types of Psalms

- Psalms often categorized based on content
 - For example,
 - *Psalms of praise* (e.g. 100, 146-150)
 - *Psalms of lament* (e.g. 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, ...)
 - *Psalms of thanksgiving* (e.g. 9, 30, 34, 118, 138)
 - *Psalms of trust/confidence* (e.g. 11, 16, 23, 91, 139)
 - *Psalms of remembrance* (e.g. 78, 105, 106)
 - *Royal/Kingship psalms* (e.g. 2, 20, 45, 72, 110)
 - *Wisdom psalms/psalms of instruction* (e.g. 1, 119)
 - *Psalms of Zion* (e.g. 46, 48, 76, 84)
 - *Songs of ascent* (pilgrimage psalms) - 120-134

Types of Psalms

- 3 major types of Psalms
 - Praise Psalms
 - Lament Psalms
 - Thanksgiving Psalms
- sometimes referred to as songs of
 - orientation (praise)
 - disorientation (lament)
 - reorientation (thanksgiving)

Types of Psalms

- Praise psalms (e.g. Psalm 117)
 - hymns of praise to God
 - "songs of orientation"
 - what we should be doing as God's people
 - dominate the overall tone of the Psalms
 - the Hebrew name for the book of Psalms is *Tehillim* - "praises"
 - climax of the book - 5 praise psalms (146-150)
 - may be further subcategorized by reasons for praising God

Types of Psalms

- Lament psalms (e.g. Psalm 5)
 - the largest number of psalms are laments
 - "songs of disorientation"
 - express grief, anguish, internal conflict, frustration in the face of trouble
 - internal causes (e.g. sickness) or external causes (e.g. enemies)
 - often express a sense of distance from God, or feelings of abandonment by Him (e.g. 13)
 - reflect the realities of life in a fallen world

Types of Psalms

- Lament psalms (e.g. Psalm 5)
 - several basic elements (not necessarily in every lament psalm):
 - *Invocation* - calling on God (5:1)
 - *Plea to God* for help/deliverance (5:1-3)
 - *Complaint* (5:4-6, 9)
 - *Confession of sin, or assertion of innocence* (5:7-8)
 - *Curse upon enemies* (5:10)
 - *Expression of confidence in God* (5:11-12)
 - *Praise/thanksgiving* (5:11-12)

Types of Psalms

- Thanksgiving psalms (e.g. Psalm 118)
 - "songs of reorientation"
 - expressions of gratitude to God for what He has done
 - deliverance from trials/answered prayer
 - Basic elements
 - recounting of the troubles faced
 - God's response/deliverance
 - Thanksgiving/praise

Psalms – Major Themes

- God
 - His greatness and glory
 - His might and power
 - in Creation
 - in protecting and saving His people
 - His sovereignty over all things
 - His holiness, righteousness, and justice
 - His transcendence and His immanence

Psalms – Major Themes

- God
 - His goodness and mercy
 - His steadfast faithfulness and trustworthiness
 - His loving care and concern for His Creation, and in particular for His people
 - His abundant generosity
 - His Word
 - His Anointed One
 - His holy city (Zion)

Psalms – Major Themes

- Man
 - Our place before God, as His creation
 - Our utter dependence on Him
 - Our responsibility to Him
 - The appropriateness of praise and thanksgiving to Him

Psalms – Major Themes

- Man
 - Our response to God and relationship with God
 - praise and thanksgiving → declaring/proclaiming His greatness
 - delighting in Him and in His Word
 - obedience to His commands
 - trust and confidence in Him
 - cries to Him in the face of hardship and suffering
 - teaches us how to talk to God in a way that honors Him, even in the midst of suffering

Psalms – Major Themes

- Man
 - The righteous and the wicked
 - what characterizes them
 - the paradox of the wicked prospering while the righteous suffer
 - their ultimate destiny

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

- extensively used by Jesus Christ and NT writers to refer to Him

"Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" (Luke 24:44)

- “Messianic” psalms

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

1. Psalms speaking about Jesus Christ

– e.g. Psalm 2

- Psalm 2:1-2 – Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired with the Gentiles & people of Israel against Jesus Christ (Acts 4:25-28)
- Psalm 2:7 - Hebrews 1:5 - the superiority of Jesus Christ as the Son of God
- Psalm 2:9 – Jesus Christ’s authority to rule the nations (Revelation 2:27)

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

1. Psalms speaking about Jesus Christ

– Others include

- Psalm 8: all things under Christ's feet (v.4-6, cf. Heb. 2:5-9)
- Psalm 16 - resurrection of Christ (v.9-11, cf. Acts 2:25-28)
- Psalm 22 – the Crucifixion of Christ
- Psalm 45 - an everlasting throne (v.6-7, cf. Heb. 1:8-9)
- Psalm 69 - events surrounding Christ's crucifixion
- Psalm 72 - a ruler who will reign from sea to sea
- Psalm 110 - a victorious king, and priest in the order of Melchizedek

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

2. Psalms as the words & prayers of Jesus Christ
 - the words of Jesus Christ, spoken prophetically through the Psalmist

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

2. Psalms as the words & prayers of Jesus Christ

A. Words actually spoken by Jesus Christ

- For example,
 - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; cf. Psalm 22:1)
 - "Into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46; cf. Psalm 31:5)
 - "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25; cf. Psalm 35:19; 69:4)

Psalms – Glimpses of Christ

2. Psalms as the words & prayers of Jesus Christ

B. Words that express a sentiment that characterized Jesus Christ

- For example,
 - "Zeal for your house consumes me" (Psalm 69:9; cf. John 2:17)
 - » Spoken prophetically by David, but true of Jesus Christ and applied to Him clearing out the temple

Next class

- Job

References

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