

The Psalms: Session One

The Psalms, 'is...the book where millions of believers - Jews and Christians - down through many centuries have found words for every possible occasion and experience: words of faith and hope, of pain and forgiveness, of encouragement and peace. It speaks about God as he truly is, and about life as it often is. It speaks to our hearts, and lets us speak from our hearts.' (Chris Wright)

1. AUTHORSHIP: WHO WROTE THE PSALMS?

2. STRUCTURE: HOW ARE THE PSALMS ARRANGED?

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41 *Ps 41:13*
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72 *Ps 72:18-19*
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89 *Ps 89:52*
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106 *Ps 106:48*
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150 *Ps 150*

Why are the Psalms arranged like this? Theories:

2.1. Reflecting the Torah

2.2. From Lament to Praise

2.3. The Story of the People of Israel

3. CONTENT: WHAT TYPES OF PSALM ARE THERE?

3.1. Psalms of Praise (8, 33, 47, 65, 66, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 117, 145-150).

3.2. Royal (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144).

3.3. Lament and Despair (3-7; 10-14; 16-17; 22-23; 25-28; 31; 35-36; 38-43; 44; 51-59; 60; 61-64; 69; 71; 73; 74; 77; 79; 80; 83; 86; 88; 89; 102; 109)

3.4. Psalms of Zion (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, 125)

4. PREACHING FROM THE PSALMS

Model One

4.1. Songs of Orientation (Ps 1, 19, 24, 119)

4.2. Songs of Disorientation (e.g. Ps 35, 74, 88)

4.3. Songs of New Orientation (e.g. Ps 30, 34, 66, 73, 97)

Model Two

4.4. Songs for Faith

4.5. Psalms for Living

4.6. Songs for Mission

The Psalms: Session Two Interpreting the Psalms

1. THREE DIFFICULTIES

1.1. 'It's all subjective!'

1.2. 'If only they were epistles!'

1.3. Which direction are the Psalms pointing?

Psalm 46

2. UNDERSTANDING HEBREW POETRY

2.1. Parallelism

Inversion, Repetition, Explanation, Contrast.

a. Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

b. Psalm 33:6

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

c. Isaiah 1:3

*The ox knows his master,
The donkey his owner's manger,
But Israel does not know,
My people do not understand.*

d. Hosea 5:14

*For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I
will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with
no-one to rescue them.*

2.2. Poetic Licence, Metaphor & Simile

Psalm 103:13

Psalm 19:1-4

2.3. Poetic Mood & Emotional Impact

'...in order to preach them the Psalms faithfully we need to try to enter into the experience and the emotions of the writers. Don't read the Psalms "cold"...try to see, hear and feel that [the emotion]. Identify the mood as well as the message of each psalm as part of your preparation for preaching it.' (Chris Wright)

3. The Psalms in Redemptive-Historical Context

Specific events:

- Psalm 51 & adultery with Bathsheba
- Ps 59 when Saul's men seeking David to kill him
- Ps 63 when David is in the desert

Books of history:

- Psalm 51 - 2 Samuel 11-12.
- Psalm 56 - 1 Sam 21
- Psalm 57 - 1 Sam 24
- Ps 59 go to 1 Sam 19:11ff
- Ps 63 go to 2 Sam 15:23

4. POETIC PROPHECY AND FULFILMENT

1. Conscious of the Three peaks of Biblical Fulfilment

1st = Initial fulfilment in Israel's history

2nd = Jesus' first coming

3rd = Jesus' second coming

2. Typology:

5. IDEAS FOR PREACHING THE PSALMS

- Meditate

- Use concrete language

- Use parallelism

- Use music

- Work in partnership with the rest of the service

- Consider using actual images

- Use an expressive voice and body

Suggested Reading List

General

- *Sweeter than Honey*, Christopher Wright, Langham Preaching Resources (2015)
- *Tyndale O.T. Commentaries: Volume 1: Psalms 1-72, Volume 2: Psalms 73-150*, Derek Kidner, IVP
- *Gospel and Wisdom* (now included in the Goldsworthy Trilogy) Graeme Goldsworthy IVP
- *Reflections on the Psalms*, C.S. Lewis, Fount
- *Preaching with Variety*, Jeffrey D. Arthurs, Kregel Publications (2007)
- *Bible Delight: Heartbeat of the Word of God: Psalm 119 for the Bible Teacher and Hearer*, Christopher Ash, Proclamation Trust

Treatments of Specific Psalms

- *Treasures of the King (Psalms from the Life of David)*, Alec Motyer IVP (2007)
- *Journey (Psalms for Pilgrim People) - on Psalms 120-134 - the songs of Ascent*, Alec Motyer IVP (2009)
- *Life Through God's Word (on Psalm 119)* Chris Wright, Authentic (2006)