

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

CHAPTER 11 – THE PSALMS:
ISRAEL'S PRAYERS AND OURS

THE PSALMS

- How do these words which were spoken *to* God function as a word *from* God to us?
- They do not function primarily to teach morality or doctrine.
- They function to show us how to express ourselves to God and to consider God's ways.

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

- Psalms as Poetry

- Hebrew poetry was addressed to the mind through the heart.

- Must be careful to not overexegete the text to find hidden meanings, when the language is often emotive not intellectual.

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

- Psalms as Poetry
 - The psalms are musical poems
 - The intention is to elicit emotion to drive change rather than serve a merely cognitive purpose

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

- Psalms as Poetry
 - The vocabulary is purposefully metaphorical
 - We must listen to and learn from the metaphor rather than trying to find literal meanings.

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

- Psalms as Literature
 - Psalms are of several different types
 - Each psalm is characterized by its formal structure
 - Each type of psalm had a given function in the life of Israel
 - There are various patterns within the psalms
 - Each psalm has its own integrity as a literary unit

THE USE OF PSALMS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

- The psalms were *functional*, meaning that they served the function of connecting the worshipper to God

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- There are 7 categories of psalms
- Correctly identifying the type of psalm is critical in understanding the function and meaning of the psalm

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **Laments**

- These are the most common of the psalms with at least 60 of the 150 psalms, 40%, being laments
- These represent the state of fallen humanity and their frequency declares a need for greater hope

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- Laments

- They are comprised of the following categories:

- Address
- Complaint
- Trust
- Deliverance
- Assurance
- Praise

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **Laments**

- Imprecatory Psalms exist most frequently as a subset of Laments
- These verbalize our anger towards others to God
- These teach us to not deny our anger but to express it to God and place our trust in His justice.

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- Thanksgiving
 - These help people (individually and corporately) express gratitude to God
 - There are 6 community psalms of thanksgiving and 10 for the individual

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- Thanksgiving
 - These are comprised of the following categories:
 - Introduction
 - Distress
 - Appeal
 - Deliverance
 - Testimony

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- Hymns of Praise

- These center not on specific issues or instances, but on the fullness of the greatness and wonder of God.
- There are 16 of these psalms

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **Salvation-History Psalms**
 - These focus on God's saving work evident in the history of the Israelites
 - There are 5 of these psalms

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **Celebration and Affirmation**
 - These declare God's sovereignty and acknowledge His guiding hand
 - These further break into "Enthronement Psalms" (9), "Royal Psalms" (9), and "Songs of Zion" (6)

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **Wisdom Psalms**

- These focus on the merits of wisdom and leading a wise life.
- There are 8 of these psalms (Proverbs Chapter 8 also falls into this category).

THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- Songs of Trust

- These show that in all situations God can be trusted and He is faithful
- There are 10 of these psalms

THE BENEFITS OF PSALMS

- They serve as a guide to worship
- They teach us how we can relate honestly to God
- They demonstrate the importance of reflection and meditation on what God has done for us
- They do not, however, guarantee a pleasant life, but they teach us how to rely on God in every circumstance

EXEGETE A PSALM

- What type is it
 - Lament, Thanksgiving, Praise, Salvation History, Celebration and Affirmation, Wisdom, and Trust
- What is the context?
- What does it mean for us?

HOMework FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Chapter 12
- What is your favorite passage of Scripture from any of the Wisdom Books (Proverbs, Job, or Ecclesiastes)?