

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

March 7, 2018

Psalms 90-150

Answers to the questions in Lesson 16 (Psalms)

Page 83. Human emotions conveyed in the Psalms:

- A. Extreme gratitude that the Lord cares for individuals and has such deep relationships.
- B. Feeling forgotten by the Lord during times of distress.
- C. Awareness of sin and need for forgiveness.
- D. Seeking revenge.

Page 83. Types of poetry in the Psalms.

- thanksgiving and praise to the Lord, including doxologies
- laments, both from an individual and on behalf of the community, usually ending with confidence in the Lord's steadfast love
- prayers and meditations
- hymns and songs for worship
- wisdom literature

Page 84. It is significant that psalms rhyme thoughts rather than sounds so that readers of any translation in any language can make connections to the human-ness and God-ness in the Psalms. Reading in a language other than Hebrew does mean that we miss sound patterns (acrostics, repetition of consonants/vowels, etc.)

Page 85. Tradition says that David wrote more than half of the Psalms, that Moses wrote Psalms 90-100, and that some others wrote individual psalms (Jeremiah: Ps. 137; Haggai: Ps. 146; Zechariah: Ps. 147). Many of the psalms are anonymous. They were written over several centuries, with the book coming to its final form in the 2nd century BCE. Titles (superscriptions) of psalms added as part of collecting and editing the final form of the book.

Page 85. Clusters of Psalms:

- 1-41 all use *Elohim* as the name for the Lord; 42-72 use *Yahweh*.
- 93-100 stress the kingship of the Lord.
- 113-118 are known as the *Egyptian Hallel* ("Hallel = "praise").
- 120-134 are called *Songs of Ascent* which was part of the *Great Hallal*.
- 146-150 are known as the *Final Hallel* with each psalm beginning and ending with *Praise the Lord* (most English translations) or *Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord*.



Psalms

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) and Book 5 (Psalms 107-150)

Overall structure and themes of the Psalms

Psalms 1-2: introduction to the whole book

Psalms 146-150: conclusion for the whole book

Each of the five books within the entire Book of Psalms has its own introductory psalm and ends with a “doxology” (a liturgical formula of praise, e.g., “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who ...”) as the last verse(s) of the last psalm in that book.

Chart on p. 87 of the workbook shows the breakdown into the five books and includes a comparison of the five books within Psalms to the five books of the Pentateuch (Jewish name: Torah). But that chart is too simple: (1) ideas and texts from all the books in the Torah and from other psalms as well as from other books (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Job) can be found in all five of the books; (2) authorship is not as “clean” as indicated in that chart.

Overall themes: The Lord as Creator, “steadfast love” of the Lord, and the Lord as someone who brings justice. An overall message is the importance of the individual as part of a community.

Seeing Jesus Christ in the Psalms

Many of the psalms are “messianic”: they look forward to the promised Messiah that the Jews believed would come. So, in that sense, Psalms is part of the “redemption” theme we’ve seen in other books we’ve studied so far. Jesus and his disciples did apply some of these messianic verses to Jesus; as Christians, we “point back” to these verses (some listed below):

- “I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you.’” (Ps. 2:7) (Acts 13:33, Heb. 1:5, Heb. 5:5)
- “You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Ps. 2:9) (Rev. 2:26-27, Rev. 12:5, Rev. 19:15)
- “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” (Ps. 22:1) (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34)
- “They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.” (Ps. 22:18) (Matt. 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34, John 19:23-24)
- “Into thy hand I commit my spirit.” (Ps. 31:5a) (Luke 23:46)

- “Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; but thou hast given me an open ear, Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then I said, “Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:6-8) (Heb. 10:5-10)
- “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” (Ps. 41:9) (John 13:18)
- “For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me.” (Ps. 69:9) (John 2:17, Rom. 15:3)
- “They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (Ps. 69:21) (Matt. 27:34, Mark 15:36, Luke 23:36, John 19:28-29)
- “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.’” (Ps. 110:1) (Matt. 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Acts 2:34-35, Heb. 1:13)
- “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchiz’edek.’” (Ps. 110:4) (Heb. 5:6, Heb. 6:20, Heb. 7:17, 21)
- “With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me?” (Ps. 118:6) (Heb. 13:6)
- “The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” (Ps. 118:22-23) (Matt. 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Eph. 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4, 7)
- “Blessed be he who enters in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.” (Ps. 118:26) (Matt. 21:9, Matt. 23:39, Mark 11:9, Luke 13:35, Luke 19:38, John 12:13)

[See the table at the end of this handout for listing of these and other psalm verses appearing in the New Testament.]

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106)

The author of many of these psalms is not known; the name of Moses appears many times but he isn’t the overall author although psalm 90 is attributed to him. Book 3 is heavily weighted with prayers that lament the destruction of Jerusalem; psalm 89 concludes book 3 with the announcement of God’s rejection of the covenant with David. Book 4 immediately takes the reader back to the time of Moses.

So, book 4 psalms refer to the Exodus wanderings but also stress the concepts of holiness, faithfulness on part of both God and the Hebrews, and trust. In response to the exile and its aftermath, it offers the *answer* – God reigns!

Most of these psalms lack titles (superscriptions); some of the psalms are introductions to the following psalm. A short summary:

- Psalm 90: a community lament likely about the Exodus wanderings; some think it was written during the Exile; needs to be read in the context of the stories about Moses in the Pentateuch

- Psalms 91-99: were used regularly for Sabbath worship (e.g., entrance and departure liturgy at the Temple or in procession to the Temple)
- Psalms 96-99 subset as royal psalms (“Yahweh-as-King” songs) to retain focus that the coming Messiah would be ideal king; patterns/repetitions/differences in focus (repetition indicates importance); (psalm 100 is an ending doxology for this subset)
 - 96 and 98 begin “O sing to the Lord a new song ...”
 - 96 and 98 end “He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with truth/equity”
 - 96 extends the Lord’s faithfulness to all nations but 98 refers only to Israelites
 - 97:1-6: the Lord’s appearance on Mount Sinai
 - 99 stresses holiness by repetition of “Holy is he ...” and “Lord our God is holy” in words of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; the Lord spoke from pillar of cloud (v. 7)
 - all use lines from other psalms and especially from Isaiah 40-55
 - importance of God’s justice and righteousness means worship of God requires social justice.
- Psalm 101: v. 1: “loyalty and justice” or “steadfast love and justice” were goals of the covenant with Moses
- Psalm 102: 5th of the 7 penitential psalms begins as lament of person and then switches to lament over Jerusalem and then switches back but ends with confidence that the Lord will be there
- Psalms 103-104: a more peaceful framing of the Lord’s steadfast love and justice
 - 104: used by some Christians on Pentecost because v. 30 refers to “thy Spirit”
- Psalms 105-106: reminder/re-telling of Israel’s history although not always in order
 - 105: written during time of Exile; reviews the ups and downs of Israel’s history from Abraham to Moses/Aaron but praises the Lord for his redeeming actions
 - 106: context is lament rather than as a song of praise; v. 48 is doxology for the group of Book 4 psalms

Book 5 (Psalms 107-150)

Almost all these psalms are related to Temple worship after returning from Exile. They were written for singing or chanting, often with an introduction followed by a call and then a response. Often there would be a soloist and a choir who would sing or chant alternately.

This group includes many references to Deuteronomy which begins with the sermons of Moses and then ends with his death; references to Exodus, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and other psalms also appear. More and more verses are wisdom literature with an increasing number of references to Proverbs.

Organization of the book:

- Psalm 107: introduction to book 5
- Psalms 108-110: Psalms of David
- Psalms 111-118: Hallelujah Psalms

- Psalms 113-118: *Egyptian Hallel*; sung for three great pilgrimages for Passover, Weeks (when 10 Commandments given), and Tabernacles (or Booths, commemorating years protected in the wilderness)
- Psalm 119: introduction to the Psalms of Ascent
- Psalms 120-134: Psalms of Ascent
- Psalms 135-136: “Great Hallel” (i.e., Great Praise) for Sabbath services
- Psalm 137: a strange insertion in this place because it is a community lament during the Babylonian exile (tradition says written by Jeremiah)
- Psalms 138-145: Psalms of David
- Psalms 146-150: “Te Deum” Psalms

Psalms of David (108-110, 138-145):

- “of David” can mean in the “in the style of” or “in the time of”
- Many of these psalms take sections verbatim from other psalms (Psalm 108 consists of verses from Ps. 57 and Ps. 60; Ps. 144 uses Ps. 18).
- Commentary writers say that the texts are often confusing, due to neglect and “scribal incompetence.”
- Psalm 110 about crowning of King is not as important by this time period. But v. 1 (“The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’”) is one of the most-cited psalm verses in the New Testament when referring to Christ’s resurrection; v. 4 referring to Melchizedek is used to predict the priesthood of Jesus
- Several are laments of persons unjustly accused but they end with confidence in the Lord’s steadfast love. Several call for extreme punishment of enemies.
- Psalm 143 is the last penitential psalm.

Hallelujah Psalms (111-118)

- Psalm 111-112 are complementary psalms, written as acrostics: Ps. 111 celebrates a righteous Lord; Ps. 112 celebrates a righteous person. Examples of wisdom literature: Ps. 111:10a: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”; wickedness doesn’t win (Ps. 112:10).
- Picturesque language calling for reader’s imagination: mountains skipping like rams and hills like lambs in Ps. 114.
- Psalm 117 is the shortest psalm but calls for praise of a universal Lord: “all nations” and “all peoples.”

Psalms of Ascent (120-134, with introductory Ps. 119)

- Group of psalms formed a psalter used by pilgrims on way to or from Jerusalem.
- Psalm 119 is the longest psalm. Commentary writer says “nothing special” and suggests could read from end to beginning without destroying the meaning. Unusual that it doesn’t refer to Israelite history or to Temple worship. Each stanza of eight verses begins with letter of Hebrew alphabet with each verse beginning with same letter.
- Some pilgrims faced danger as they travelled through non-Israelite areas on way to Jerusalem; so, many of these psalms call for help, ask for reassurance, are grateful for others who travel with them, express confidence that Yahweh will keep them safe, and express relief and thanksgiving when they arrive in Jerusalem.

- Psalms 127-128 are wisdom psalms.
- Psalm 132 seems a bit out of place because it refers to David's oath that the Ark of the Covenant will be brought to Jerusalem.

Great Hallel Psalms (135-136)

- Psalm 135, an introduction to the following psalm, was sung every Sabbath except the one before the New Year. It reminds the hearers that God chose Israel to be his people and then reviews the history resulting from that choice.
- Psalm 136 is a good example of how the psalms would be sung. A soloist or small group would sing the first part of the verse and the choir would repeat the same refrain "for his steadfast love endures forever." The phrases "God of gods" and "Lord of lords" in vs. 2-3 is a reminder of Deuteronomy's emphasis that Yahweh is above all other gods.

"Te Deum" Psalms (146-150)

- "Te Deum" = a hymn that begins *Te Deum laudamus* ("We praise Thee, O God")
- All begin with "Praise the Lord" or similar wording depending upon the translation; that phrase appears 13 times in the six verses of Psalm 150.
- Most of the verses are from other psalms.
- Emphasis is different in each:
 - Psalm 146: promise to praise the Lord means to engage in social justice
 - Psalm 147: three aspects of God: Yahweh of history, Lord of nature, and God of Zion (Jerusalem/Jewish people)
 - Psalm 148: let the whole universe praise God (imaginative wording again: "sea monsters" and "creeping things")
 - Psalm 149: continues thought of 148 but focus is now on Israel's praise.
- Psalm 150: doxology for Psalms 146-149, for book 5, and for entire book of Psalms.

Note that the hymnal *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* lists the words of the 150 Psalms and then begins the numbering of the hymns (words and music) with "151."

Where else do we see verses from the Psalms?

- More than 100 quotations in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, in writings and speeches of Paul and Peter, and in Hebrews [see table at end of handout]
- In liturgy/worship
- In hymns and other songs

Liturgical/worship use of psalm verses – some examples:

- "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14) – often used by a pastor at beginning of the sermon
- "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10) – used as congregational response when offering is presented

- “Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps. 86: 16; Ps. 103:8) – used as Gospel acclamation during Lent
- “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice” (Ps. 141:2) – basis for refrain in the “evening thanksgiving” portion of the *Holden Evening Prayer* service (being used at Redeemer now for Wednesday Lenten service)

Hymns and other music using Psalm verses or based on meaning in Psalms – some examples:

- “The Lord is my shepherd ...” (Ps. 23) – *The Lord’s My Shepherd; My Shepherd, You Supply My Need*
- “Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in” (Ps. 24:7+; and many other psalm verses) – in Handel’s *Messiah*
- “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34: 8) and “I will bless the Lord at all times” (Ps. 34:1) – *Taste and See; Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup*
- “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ...” (Ps. 46) – inspiration for *A Mighty Fortress is our God*
- “You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’” (Ps. 91) – *On Eagle’s Wings*
- “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” (Ps. 103:1) – *Bless the Lord, O My Soul*
- “O Lord, you have searched me and known me ...” (Ps. 139) – inspiration for *I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry*

The Psalm each Sunday is connected to the theme of the Old Testament lesson and the Gospel reading. The list of psalms in the *Revised Common Lectionary* can be found here:

<http://www.criovoice.org/lectionary/lectionlistpsa.html>

Personal reflection by Judy, as someone who doesn’t like poetry, about a way to approach the psalms (based on recent advice from PSK):

- Select a psalm that reflects your current emotion or your desire or one that you find comforting.
- Read the psalm slowly out loud; pay attention to each word.
- If the psalm includes vengeful language, replace that situation with a situation that is troubling you (e.g., Ps. 139:19-22).
- Another thought is this wording from “d365.org” devotions from the week of Feb. 12, 2018: “Listen slowly — You can hear something quickly, but you can really only listen slowly. Hearing may happen accidently, but listening only happens intentionally.”

Assignment for March 14

Read Proverbs or the sections of that book listed on p. 86.

2:1, 2	Acts 4:25, 26
2:7	Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 ; 5:5
2:8, 9	Revelation 2:26, 27; 12:5; 19:15
4:4	Ephesians 4:26
5:9	Romans 3:13
6:3a	John 12:27
6:8	Matthew 7:23; Luke 13:27
8:2	Matthew 21:16
8:4-6	Hebrews 2:6-8
8:6	1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22
10:7	Romans 3:14
14:1c, 2b, 3	Romans 3:10-12
16:8-11	Acts 2:25-28
16:10b	Acts 13:35
18:2b	Hebrews 2:13
18:49	Romans 15:9
19:4	Romans 10:18
22:1	Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34
22:7	Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35
22:8	Matthew 27:43
22:18	John 19:24; compare Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34
22:22	Hebrews 2:12
24:1	1 Corinthians 10:26 [28]
31:5a	Luke 23:46
32:1, 2	Romans 4:7, 8
34:8	1 Peter 2:3
34:12-16	1 Peter 3:10-12
34:20	John 19:36
35:19b	John 15:25
36:1b	Romans 3:18
37:11a	Matthew 5:5

38:11	Luke 23:49
40:6-8	Hebrews 10:5-7
41:9	John 13:18
41:13	Luke 1:68
42:5	Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34
44:22	Romans 8:36
45:6, 7	Hebrews 1:8, 9
48:2	Matthew 5:35
51:4	Romans 3:4
53:1-3	Romans 3:10-12
55:22	1 Peter 5:7
62:12	Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6
68:18	Ephesians 4:8
69:4	John 15:25
69:9a	John 2:17
69:9b	Romans 15:3
69:21	Matthew 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28, 29
69:22, 23	Romans 11:9, 10
69:25	Acts 1:20
72:18	Luke 1:68
78:2	Matthew 13:35
78:24	John 6:31
82:6	John 10:34
86:9	Revelation 15:4
88:8	Luke 23:49
89:10	Luke 1:51
89:20	Acts 13:22
90:4	2 Peter 3:8
91:11, 12	Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10, 11
91:13	Luke 10:19
94:11	1 Corinthians 3:20
94:14	Romans 11:1, 2

95:7-11	Hebrews 3:7-11, 15, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 7
97:7	Hebrews 1:6
98:3	Luke 1:54
102:25-27	Hebrews 1:10-12
103:17	Luke 1:50
104:4	Hebrews 1:7
105:8, 9	Luke 1:72, 73
106:10	Luke 1:71
106:45	Luke 1:72
106:48	Luke 1:68
107:9	Luke 1:53
109:8	Acts 1:20
109:25	Matthew 27:39
110:1	Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43; Acts 2:34, 35; Hebrews 1:13. Compare. Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22
110:4	Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21
111:9a	Luke 1:68
111:9c	Luke 1:49
112:9	2 Corinthians 9:9
116:10	2 Corinthians 4:13
117:1	Romans 15:11
118:6	Hebrews 13:6
118:22, 23	Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4, 7
118:25, 26	Matthew 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13
132:5	Acts 7:46
132:11	Acts 2:30
132:17	Luke 1:69
135:14a	Hebrews 10:30
140:3b	Romans 3:13
143:2b	Romans 3:20
146:6	Acts 4:24; 14:15

