

Calvin on Psalms: “ *What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to find words to describe...I have been wont to call this book not inappropriately, an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.*”

Introduction to ‘The Writings’

1. **KING:** Many of the writings are written by kings to either their sons specifically or more generally to their people.
2. **COVENANT:** Wisdom literature is how to live in God the King’s place; how to dwell in His holy presence, walking with Him as in paradise (cf. Deut. 10:12-13). The Writings are concerned with how to live godly, wise and holy lives in the presence of the King. The end of the covenant is that God’s people would walk wisely before Him as they were created to live! The wisdom would be for all to see and desire by God’s Spirit.
3. **DWELLING:** The Aim/Purpose of the Writings: To return Israel to their God and King in worship and service; to establish a righteous, redeemed, and restored-resurrected people in the land in the very presence of God.

THE PSALMS: The Worship and Hymnbook of Israel

Structure (Outline) of Psalm Book

Five Books: Psalms 1, 42, 73, 90, 107

The Psalter is a microcosm of the teaching of the whole Old Testament (M. Luther).

The Psalter is the Story of the David’s Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ:

- Books 1 & 2 Sing the Life of David
 - Book 1 (Psalm 1-41)
 - Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)
- Book 3 Sings about David in Exile (73-89)
- Book 4 Sings about a Return/Repentance to Torah of Moses (90-106)
- Book 5 Sings about the Triumph/Victory of a New and Better David (David’s Greater Son), and a Greater Exodus (resurrection-restoration from exile) (Psalms 107-150)

Genres of Psalms

Hymns of Joy, Lament, Thanksgiving Psalm, Psalm of Remembrance, Psalm of Confidence, Wisdom Psalm, Royal (Kingship-Messianic) Psalm

Hymns of Joy: (Psalm 100; 103:1-2).

Three parts of hymn:

- 1) Call to worship
- 2) God is worthy to be praised for...
- 3) Let us praise Him (Psa. 113:1; Psa. 92:1, 4).

Laments: (Psalm 22).

Types: 1) Troubled by one's own thoughts and actions; 2) Complaint about others, esp. enemies; 3) Frustrated by God Himself (Psa. 42-43).

Structure of Laments:

- 1) Invocation (a cry to God)
- 2) Plea to God for help
- 3) Complaints (*to God in reverence and awe as Heavenly Father, not against God*)
- 4) Petition / Confession of sin or assertion of innocence
- 5) Curse of enemies (imprecation)- An eye toward the Day of Judgment (a prayer for repentance and/or equity/fairness/justice)
- 6) Confidence in God- Confession of Trust in God
- 7) Hymn or blessing- Praise/Worship of God despite circumstances

Thanksgivings: (Psalms 56:12; 34:1; 30:4)

Also...Psalms of...

Confidence: (Psalm 46; 11; 27; 91; 131).

Remembrance: (Psalm 78; 105).

Wisdom: (Psalm 1; 19).

Royalty/Kingship: (Psalm 2; 45).

Introduction to Old Testament Poetry/Hebrew Poetry

Introduction to Poetry in Holy Scripture: In narratives (Gen. 2:23; Exodus 14-15; 1 Sam. 1-2; Luke 1-2); in prophecies (both major and minor prophets are written in poetry, including Lamentations by Jeremiah).

Why does God use poetry in the Bible? Example of Exodus 14 and 15.

Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry

Parallelism and Other Forms in Hebrew Poetry

There is rhythm and there are beautiful forms in the Psalms, but the chief characteristic of the Psalms specifically, and Hebrew poetry generally, is parallelism.

Psalms 2; 6

“A, what’s more B”: A way of echoing or matching one thought with another (e.g. “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities” –Psa. 63:10). Second line reinforces the first and the content is “enriched” (D. Kidner).

Synonymous Parallelism- Psalm 2; 8: Pairing, not contrasting (e.g. Psa. 8: “man” and “son of man”; Psa. 63: “my flesh” and “my soul”). Not merely synonymous, but the second line like a larger wave mounts higher than the first (e.g. Psa. 145:8: “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth”).

Antithetic Parallelism- Psalm 1; Prov. 10:1- contrasts: like righteous vs. wicked.

Inclusio- Psalm 8- bookends

Acrostic Poetry- Psalm 119- Hebrew Alphabet: Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth...etc.

Imagery

How is God described? Psalm 113; Psalm 29

Simile (Psalm 42:1; 7:1-2; 37:1-2)

Metaphor (Psalm 23)

Mythical Allusions in the Psalms (Psalm 74:12-14; 29; 48)

Thematic-Theological: The Psalms are the Covenantal Hymnbook of Israel

For Worship Corporately as the people of God

For Worship privately and relationally in devotion, prayer, meditation to God

For Meditation (Psalm 1): 1) Fix your thoughts; 2) Ignite your affections/emotions+will; 3) Rejoice and delight in God (“gust”)!

The Israelite had a “ready-made prayer for all of life’s vicissitudes” (T. Longman).

How do you feel today? What are you thinking about? What has captured your imagination? Are you fearful, sad, joyful, without hope, downcast, thankful, glad, etc.?

Psalms and the Living, Triune, Covenantal God

The Book of Psalms is a covenantal book of God’s revelation of Himself to His people. The ultimate “gateway” or door into God’s presence/sanctuary through worship and personal devotion.

The Psalms make up a “literary temple” where God dwells to seek God and to find Him in His sanctuary (Psa. 63).

What do we learn about God specifically from Psalms (in content and form)?

1. Our God is covenantal God

He binds Himself to His promises to us (covenant: “bond in blood sovereignly administered”); this is revealed in progressive redemptive-history in the Psalms. God has a relationship to His people; He is Immanuel, “God with us”. The Psalms are part of God’s condescending covenantal mercies to poor sinners to “dwell with us” in our own language, emotions, needs, etc.

- a. Covenant Lord: The distance between Creator and creatures is so great that God must condescend to make covenant to reveal Himself (WCOF, 7:1). If distance is so great in being, just think about the distance between God as holy Lord and we are miserable sinners who are at enmity with the covenant Lord in our sinful natures!
- b. God, the Triune Lord, covenants to redeem a people from sin through a Mediator. Let us rejoice and sing!
- c. God reveals Himself and His salvation progressively in history. Recollection of salvation events (e.g. Psalms 78, 89) are to bring the past into the present to reveal God’s faithfulness (Hesed: covenantal faithfulness).
- d. Psalms help us to grow relationally in our covenant with God, and with each other (horizontal and vertical dimensions to the worship): A. Drawing near to God; B. Safety, security, confidence, and covenantal love to others. The Psalms are a “covenantal prayer book” for God’s people: How do we approach God, draw near to Him, worship, revere Him, and pray?

2. Our God is a literary artist and genius (as we would expect as Creator)- Form and content is inspired revelation of God; God is Poet/Bard *par excellence*.

- a. Revelation: Gods initiating, condescending, covenantal approach to His people through revealing Himself, His promises, using Images such as King, Shepherd, Friend, Husband, Father, and Mother, etc.
- b. Receiving, Reverencing and Rejoicing: Our approach to our king.

3. Our God loves to sing! (Zeph. 3:17; Heb. 8:1)

Music is an apt and inspired way of worshipping and devoting our hearts to our God who has given Himself to us!

4. Our God rejoices in the Messiah-Savior!

God provides a Savior for sinners! Triune God who rejoices as Father in covenanting, redeeming, and revealing His Beloved Son as Author and Subject of Psalms, the Holy Spirit as Creator, Hymn-writer, and the One who inspires men to write inerrantly and infallibly.

Messianic Hope: Jesus as Object and Subject of the Psalms

Salvation is central to the Psalms: sin must be forgiven and a blood/sacrifice must be offered (Psa. 32; 51; 130:1-4).

Jesus is central to the Psalms; the Psalms are Christocentric. More than merely looking for a few “Messianic Psalms”, the Psalms are about Jesus (Luke 24:24-27; John 5:39-40).

Jesus is Ultimate Psalm Singer: Not merely David’s sayings are Messianic, but David as the Psalm Singer is explicitly Messianic and Christocentric:

- A. “Anointed King”- Psalms 2, 45, 89, 110
- B. “My Son”- Psa. 2:7; 89:27; 110
- C. “God”- Psa. 45:6; 102:25-27
- D. “Thy Servant”- Psalm 22, 40, 69, 118

→ **“God-Man”** will be both God and man, one Person with two natures (Jesus Christ). King, but Son of David, Son of God, yet equal with God, yet a servant: Behold the Messiah of God in the face of Jesus Christ! This is the revelation and supreme revelation of the Father’s tender-mercies and Heseb-Love for sinners! Behold, the Christ! Let us sing, let us rejoice!

Isaiah and Psalms are quoted more in the New Testament as books that reveal Jesus Christ more than any others!

The Psalms are both prayers “to Jesus” (as God), and prayers “of Jesus” (as man). Jesus is God-man, greater King and David’s beloved son (see Luke 1:31-33; Psalm 89:3-4).

Jesus is God's definitive answer to the Psalm-cries of God's people:

Hymns of Joy: Christ is come! Christ rejoices in God the Father by the Spirit

Laments: Christ is come in our darkness and in a world of sin and misery has taken on our nature;
Christ laments and weeps in the broken world tainted by sin and misery

Thanksgiving: Christ is come! Christ gives thanks!

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