

Lesson 17

PSALMS

GOD STATEMENT FOR PSALMS: THE GOD WHO _____ (a)

The Jews call the book of Psalms *Tehillim*, which means “_____ (b)” or “songs of praises,” and in the Hebrew Bible it’s placed at the beginning of the section called “_____ (c)” (while we usually divide the Old Testament into five sections, the Jews divide it into three—Law, Prophets, Writings). Psalms is the longest book in the Bible by number of chapters (150) and verses (2,461) (Jeremiah is the longest in terms of words). It contains the shortest chapter in the Bible (Psalm 117—two verses), as well as the longest (Psalm 119—176 verses), and it’s quoted more times in the New Testament than any other book. Of the New Testament’s 283 direct quotations from the Old Testament, 117 (40.3%) are from Psalms.

Psalms may be the best-known and most loved book of the Bible. It has shaped the prayer and worship of every generation of God’s people because, as many have observed, it’s a “mirror to the soul.” The Psalms speak to the whole gamut of human _____ (d) and _____ (e). And not only that, but they also embrace the full range of biblical confessions about God’s _____ (f), _____ (g), and concerns. He’s called Creator, sustainer, protector, Savior, judge, covenant maker, and restorer.

WHO WROTE THE PSALMS?

The writing of Psalms spans about 1000 years, from Moses to the days after the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon. Nevertheless, the majority of the Psalms come from the time of _____ (h), around 1000 BC. David wrote over half of psalms. Seventy-three have his name attached to them (plus the New Testament attributes Psalms 2 and 95 to him), and it’s likely that several of the anonymous psalms (forty-nine are anonymous) came from David as well.

A couple of the psalms were written by Solomon (Psalm 72 and 127), and Moses wrote one (Psalm 90). The sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms (Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, and 87-88), and, yes, they were distant relatives of the man punished in the book of Numbers for leading a rebellion against Moses. Asaph, one of the men David appointed to have

oversight of the music in the tabernacle worship (1 Chr 6:32, 39), wrote 12 psalms (Psalms 50 and 73-83). And there were a few others who wrote one or two of the psalms.

TYPES OF PSALMS

There are a number of types of psalms that we can identify including the following:

Lament Psalms

Lament is actually the most common type of psalm in the entire book. More than 50 of the 150 psalms are lament psalms. Some call these “_____ (i) psalms” because the psalmist is sad and he’s asking God to intervene on his behalf. In some he is ill. In others he has suffered injustice. In a few he feels his own guilt. In these psalms there’s a cry to God and a _____ (j) of what’s wrong. That’s followed by a confession of trust that God will deliver and the petition asking Him to intervene. Finally, there’s a promise to praise God when deliverance comes. These remind us that life will not be trouble-free even for God’s chosen and blessed people (like David). Life is not easy even for those given the promise of God’s presence and eternal life.

Gratitude Psalms

These are sometimes called “_____ (k) you psalms” and they are the largest group after the lament psalms. Interestingly enough, almost all of them are anonymous. Four things are said in every one of them: (1) a proclamation is made—“I am going to praise . . .”; (2) a statement is made about what he is going to praise God for; (3) a testimony of deliverance; and (4) a vow to continue praising God for what has happened. These psalms say a lot about God’s attributes and activities. They thank God for His kingly rule, His creation, His Word, Jerusalem, the temple, the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, etc.

Wisdom Psalms

The “wisdom psalms” are the result of quiet reflection and meditation. They resemble the book of _____ (l) and are full of practical wisdom and _____ (m) for living. The book of Psalms begins with a wisdom psalm about the conduct of life. Psalm 1 has long been considered an introduction to the whole book because of its emphasis on the importance of following God’s _____ (n). Those who obey the Lord’s word will live wisely, reject the lifestyle of unbelievers, and will prosper (Psa 1:1-3).

Messianic Psalms

Some of the psalms are messianic or _____(o) psalms. There are several direct predictions of events associated with the life of Christ. As was said earlier, the book of Psalms is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other book. Psalm 22, for instance, is a lament psalm used by Jesus when He felt God-forsaken (Psa 22:1 and Matt 27:16). The Gospel writers echoed Psalm 22:7-8 when they noted the mocking which Jesus endured (Matt 27:39-44). And the dividing of the garments in Psalm 22:18 occurs in all four Gospels. It really is astonishing to note what is prophesied about Jesus in Psalms.

Imprecatory Psalms

About twelve of the psalms presents a special problem for many Christians. These are the so-called “_____ (p) psalms.” In these psalms God’s people ask Him to bring devastating judgment on their enemies. “Imprecate” means “to invoke or call down” (evil or curses). Psalm 137, for instance, has one of the most difficult verses in the whole Bible to read and understand: “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!” (Psa 137:9). What are we supposed to do with this verse? How do we make sense of it?

In interpreting imprecatory psalms there are some important points to keep in mind: (1) these are not emotionally uncontrolled outbursts, but rather products of sound reasoning and meditation (not to mention inspiration); they are prayers based on divine _____(q)—the one praying is simply asking God to do what He has already said He will do and that is punish the wicked; (2) these are not prayers of personal _____(r). They are passionate prayers for the triumph of divine justice; (3) imprecatory prayers are provoked by the horror of _____(s); people like David prayed this way because of their deep sensitivity to the ugliness of evil; (4) rarely are such prayers for specific individuals but almost always a class or group, like “the wicked” or “those who oppose God.”

THE FORMAT OF THE BOOK

If you pay attention to the headings of the poems, in five places you’ll see the headings “Book 1” through “Book 5”. That’s because the book of Psalms is divided into five sections or _____(t).

Book One (Psalms 1-41)

Thirty-seven of the forty-one psalms in this collection are attributed to David, and it’s fair to assume the other four were written by David as

well. His life is the focal point in these psalms, and priority is given to how the Lord _____ (u) him from trouble. The most well-known psalm in this section is Psalm 23, which begins with the familiar and well-loved words, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psa 23:1).

Book Two (Psalms 42-72)

David and the sons of Korah account for most of the psalms in this collection. Many of the psalms in this section are hymns of national interest and describe God’s _____ (v) and His _____ (w) of the wicked and deliverance of the righteous. David’s public song of repentance after his sinful affair with Bathsheba is found in this section. In it, David cries out, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness” (Psa 51:1). These psalms cultivate a sense of wonder, _____ (x), and _____ (y) to God in our worship.

Book Three (Psalms 73—89)

Asaph is the author of the majority of psalms in this section. This group of “songs” celebrates God’s _____ (z), His hand in history, His faithfulness, and His covenant with David. These psalms remind us that our _____ (aa) should never cease: “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations” (Psa 89:1).

Book Four (Psalms 90-106)

Most of these psalms are anonymous, but two are attributed to David (Psalms 101 and 103) and one is attributed to Moses (Psalm 90). Primarily these psalms are anthems of praise, and apparently the psalms connected to Moses and David were chosen to highlight how the Creator _____ (bb) the _____ (cc).

Book Five (Psalms 107-150)

This section presents the God who _____ (dd) and _____ (ee). Several psalms celebrate God’s steadfast love (107:1; 108:1; 117:2; 118:1), and the famous psalms of ascent (Psalms 120-134) find pilgrims returning to _____ (ff) for worship. Here’s where we find the longest Psalm (Psalm 119) which praises God for his wonderful word.

LESSONS FROM PSALMS

- God is in _____ (gg) of all things (Psa 46:10)

- _____(hh) is very serious (Psa 51:1-4)
- God is _____(ii) (Psa 51:1,7)
- Rejoice in God's _____(jj) (Psa 73:21-28)
- God is _____(kk) (Psa 90:2)
- Remember, God is your _____(ll) both now and forever (Psa 90:1)
- Live _____(mm) for what lasts _____(nn) (Psa 90:12)
- We should continually seek a _____(oo) and more meaningful _____(pp) with God (Psa 63).
- God is a God of _____(qq), but also a God of _____(rr) (Psa 90:7-9).
- _____(ss) should dominate our lives. The Psalms are wonderfully unified by the common theme of worship; worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do (Psa 146-150).
- The most perfect _____(tt) we can offer to God is a _____(uu) and _____(vv) life (Psa 119).

KEY PASSAGES FROM PSALMS

- Psalm 23
- Psalm 42:1
- Psalm 46:10
- Psalm 46:1-3
- Psalm 51:1
- Psalm 90:12

- Psalm 103:11-12
- Psalm 84:1
- Psalm 119:9-16

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] RULES	[ll] home
[b] praises	[mm] today
[c] Writings	[nn] forever
[d] emotions	[oo] deeper
[e] feelings	[pp] relationship
[f] character	[qq] love
[g] activity	[rr] justice
[h] David	[ss] Worship
[i] please	[tt] sacrifice
[j] complaint	[uu] faithful
[k] thank	[vv] obedient
[l] Proverbs	
[m] counsel	
[n] Word	
[o] prophetic	
[p] imprecatory	
[q] promises	
[r] vengeance	
[s] sin	
[t] books	
[u] delivers	
[v] nature	
[w] judgment	
[x] awe	
[y] thankfulness	
[z] sovereignty	
[aa] worship	
[bb] sustains	
[cc] faithful	
[dd] restores	
[ee] renews	
[ff] Jerusalem	
[gg] control	
[hh] Sin	
[ii] gracious	
[jj] faithfulness	
[kk] unchanging	