

PSALMS: FIVE BOOKS IN ONE

Tonight's study is the 4th in our 5 week scan of Psalms. I'm sure by now you realize the Hebrew hymnal is divided into 5 sections. We've been taking a different section each week. But there is an interesting theory behind this 5-fold division...

The Jewish rabbis related the 5 books of psalms with the Pentateuch, or the first 5 books of the Bible. A casual glance will reveal that the length of these sections are similar in proportion to the length of the first 5 books of the Bible.

The view is just a theory, but I want to elaborate on it for your consideration ...

Psalms 1-41 correspond with Genesis, and are called "*the creation psalms*". Many of these psalms refer to God's glory within nature, and deal with mankind in general. The major author of the psalms

in this section was King David.

Psalms 42-72 shadow the book of Exodus, and are called "*the deliverance psalms*". The major author in this section was David, and the sons of Korah.

Psalms 73-89 link to Leviticus, and the dominant author in this section is Asaph - the Levite and priest. These psalms are called "*the sanctuary psalms*".

Psalms 90-106 track with Numbers. These psalms are "*the journey psalms*". And Numbers recounts Moses' dealings with the Hebrews as they wandered the desert for 40 years. This section of Psalms begins with a song of Moses.

Finally, *Psalms 107-150* correspond with Deuteronomy, and are called "*the prophetic psalms*". They're attributed to David and a man named "*Anonymous*".

A COLLECTION OF REFLECTION

The Greek word "*psalms*" literally means "*a song sung with a plucked instrument*". That means the ancient Hebrews were not "*pickin' and grinnin'*", but "*pluckin' and grinnin'*".

The Hebrews though, enjoyed putting their relationship with God to music!

The setting for the psalms range from

the exodus, Israel's deliverance from Egypt - to the exile, Judah's captivity in Babylon. The 150 psalms span a period of nearly a thousand years.

The psalms are a portrait of the devotional life of the Hebrew people through the centuries. It's an amazing *collection of reflection*.

Devotion Box - At Home With God

Psalms 90 begins, "LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

The Hebrew word translated "dwelling place" means "*den*". In most homes the living room is cold and formal. It's where you seat guests. But the den is the room where you relax - it's where the family hangs out - where you're accepted and loved just as you are - it's where everybody lets their hair down. A den is a place where you can be yourself...

That's how we should feel around God. He knows us anyway. There's no need for pretense, or cover-up. There's no need to be formal, or stiff in God's presence. Relax. Be real. God loves us. He's *our den* in all generations.

Devotion Box - Where Are You Planted?

I like verse 13, "Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God." Have you sunk roots in God's house? Have you gotten connected with God's people? Have you gotten involved in God's work?

The National Institute for Health Care Research performed a decade long study on 2700 people, to discover what social factors lowered mortality rates. In the end only one influence proved to be statistically significant... it was increased church attendance. Becoming a part of a church is not only biblical, but healthy!

Humans were made for community. That's why the world has its clubs, gangs, clans... people need a place where they belong, and connect with other people. God's plan is to meet this need through His church. Are you planted in the house of the Lord?

PSALM 102 AND ISRAEL TODAY

Psalm 102 is not only a poem, but a prophecy. It predicts events happening in Israel today. Psalm 102 is a *"psalm for modern times"*.

It's entitled, "A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD."

The first 11 verses describe the psalmist's predicament. He's been cast out of the land. He feels abandoned. He's been punished. He's tasted God's wrath. This has been the experience of the Jew for the last 2000 years.

When the national leadership of Israel rejected their Messiah, God's judgment followed. In 70 AD the Romans sacked Jerusalem and scattered the Jews among the nations - where they've remained until the 20th century. In our lifetime God has brought back His people to their land. He's reestablished the Israeli nation.

This renewed favor is what the psalmist foresees in verse 13, "You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come." I believe God's prophetic time clock restarted with the rebirth of the nation Israel.

Verse 14 says, "For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust." When Jews from all over began to journey to Palestine at the turn of the last century, the British who controlled the land offered the Jews other parcels. At one time, 6000 square miles in British East Africa were on the table, but the Jews rejected these alternatives. They longed for Judah and Samaria. Only the land of the Bible - the land God promised to their forefathers - would do. Zionist Theodor Herzl put it, "There is a land without a people. There is a people without a land. Give the land without a people to the people without a land." To this day, Jews in Israel take pleasure in their stones and dust.

Verse 16 makes an incredible statement, "For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory." The implication being, when the Lord establishes the Jewish people in Jerusalem - at that time - He will appear in all His glory. With the rebirth of Israel on May 15, 1948 - with the re-taking of Jerusalem in June, 1967 - the Lord has been building up Zion - *His return is drawing near!*

THREE WAVES OF WORSHIP

Psalm 96:1-2 tell us 3 times, "Sing to the LORD... Sing to the LORD... Sing to the LORD..." I hope you get the message! Let it rip!

Verses 7-8 tell us 3 times, "Give to the LORD... Give to the LORD... Give to the LORD..." Giving to God His due is as important a part of worship as singing His praise.

Verse 8 says when you worship God don't just open your lips, reach for your hip... pull out your wallet. "Bring an offering, and come into His courts."

Verses 11-12 tell us 3 times, "Let the heavens rejoice... Let the sea roar... Let the field be joyful..." And why? Verse 13 explains, "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth." Jesus is coming to redeem all creation.

Notice the cool progression... *Sing to the Lord, give to the Lord, and look for the Lord.* Romans 8 tells us all creation groans for redemption. When Jesus returns He'll restore all that sin has touched.

Devotion Box - Strength For Those Who Stand

The psalmist grew tired taking a stand against the wicked. How about you? You've been standing for Jesus in the classroom. You've become vocal about your faith at work. And you've been mocked, and laughed at, and you're constantly challenged. And you're a little war-weary. You're tired, and frustrated...

Verses 17-19 are for you - they're for the weary warrior! "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul." Outside the storm brews - the proud man and evildoer launch assaults - but inwardly, the Lord comforts and delights. As Paul said to the Galatians, "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Hang in there. God is proud of you!

Devotion Box - Deep Thoughts

The unknown psalmist of Psalm 92 marvels in verse 5, "O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep."

Hey, I hope you're past the point of requiring to know the hows and whys of the way God thinks and works. Trust me, His ways are higher than you can scale - his thoughts deeper than you can plunge.

I love the reflection of an early church father, "I love God because I know Him. I adore God because I cannot comprehend Him." If you could figure God out He wouldn't be much of a God. The fact that I can't... is one reason I worship Him.

PSALM 90: IT'S ABOUT TIME

Psalm 90:2 speaks of the eternity of God.

Moses says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." He has no beginning or end.

Verse 4 says 1000 years to God, is like a night watch, about 4 hours.

God is eternal. That means He doesn't just have lots of time. He exists outside of time. Time is not a limitation on God. Go to any point on a time line, and there's God - no older or younger than He would be at any other point on the same line.

He's the great "*I am*". God is eternal, yet He's always current. God has always been - will always be - and is always now. Our God is the Lord of time.

In contrast though, man is here today and gone... *well, today*. Verse 6 says we're like the grass that flourishes in the morning, and gets mowed down in the evening. Because of their unbelief God mowed down the generation of Hebrews that exited Egypt. Moses says, "we have been consumed by Your anger..."

Verse 10 speaks of mankind in general, "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

In 1996 the average life span for a US male was about the same as for a Hebrew at the time of Moses... 73.9 years. The life expectancy for American females is a little longer... 79.7. Moses just rounds it off to 70 years. If you're healthy you might make 80. But compared to the eternity of God, the psalmist tells us in verse 10, we are all "soon cut off".

The oldest person on earth, Jeanne Calment, of Arles, France recently celebrated her 120 birthday. When asked, "What kind of future did she expect?" She answered, "A short one." She was speaking for us all. Guys, life is short.

It reminds me of an older lady who was asked about her future plans. She responded, "Honey, at my age I don't even buy green bananas."

This is why Moses says in verse 12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Make your time count. Invest your time wisely. Don't forget, "Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for God will last." It's the brevity of life that makes today so important. Each day could be our last.

THE ROYAL PSALMS

Psalms 93, along with Psalms 95-100 are called "*The Royal Psalms*", or "*The Coronation Psalms*". They speak of God's throne, and His reign over the earth.

Psalm 93 doesn't open, "*The LORD will reign*" - but, "The LORD reigns..." Right this second God is on the throne in heaven. Yes, this world is in revolt, and God will end the rebellion in His time. But God is still in charge!

As in all "*The Royal Psalms*" the focus of Psalm 97 is on the throne of God. Verse 2 tell us, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." In the end every situation will be addressed with a verdict that's right and fair.

Devotion Box - Older and Bolder

Psalm 92:14 becomes more and more meaningful to me as the years roll by. "They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing..."

I hope that's said of me as I get older. I want to stay young at heart. I want my relationship with God to remain fresh and current, active and fruitful. Guys, the Lord has no mandatory retirement. Moses didn't start his ministry until he was 80. Hey, why not grow *older and bolder* at the same time?

Devotion Box - Forgiveness and Consequences

Psalm 99:8 teaches a profound lesson. "You answered them, O LORD our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, though You took vengeance on their deeds." God forgave the sin, but He didn't eliminate its consequences. It's been said, "God will forgive your sins, but your body won't." Vile and destructive habits take their toll. Even forgiven sin has its fallout.

Out on a western ranch a father lived with his wild and rambunctious son. Every time the boy got into trouble the dad drove a nail into the hitching post in front of the house. Over the years the wooden post filled up with nails.

Eventually the son was charged with a crime and thrown in prison. From his jail cell he wondered if his dad would ever forgive him. After his release he returned home, and the first thing his father did was take him out to that nail-covered post.

One by one his dad pulled the nails from the post. The boy cried at the father's vivid example of forgiveness. But when the last nail was removed the dad asked his son to look at closely at the post. The nails were gone, but it was now covered with scars. He reminded his son that the same is true with sin.

Yes, God forgives fully and freely, but our sin still leaves scars that may never be eradicated.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - September 10, 2000 - 9/24 CCSM's 20th Birthday Celebration: A full day of fun, fellowship, and reflections - 10/6-7 Marriage Retreat, "Enhancing Intimacy", at the Hilton Atlanta Northeast

For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm

Next Bible Scan - September 17 - Psalm 107-150

"Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." - Psalm 100:3

Memory Verse

A THANKFUL HEART

Psalm 100: 3 tells us "Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves..." There is no such thing as a *self-made man*.

There are only two types of people - thankful people *who give the credit to God* - or arrogant people *who steal the credit from God*.

In an old movie, "*Shenandoah*", Jimmy Stewart plays a Virginia farmer who sits down at the table, but first he prays, "Lord, we cleared this land, we ploughed it, sowed it, and harvested it, and we cooked the harvest. It wouldn't be here - we wouldn't be eating it - if we hadn't done it all ourselves. We worked dog bone hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you just the same anyway Lord for the this food we're about to eat. Amen". That's many people's attitude today. They'll say thanks, but deep inside they believe the credit belongs to them.

The psalmist takes the opposite attitude. He desperately needs God! Any good he's done - anything noble he's become - is the product of God's mercies. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:10 fits right here, "By the grace of God I am what I am..."

DEVOTION BOX - A VOW FOR THE EYES

Psalm 101 reveals the purity David desired. In verse 3 he says, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes..." I'm certain David did not have internet access - nor did he have cable television - nor did he pass a magazine rack - but if he had, I'm certain this would still be his vow. What about you? Are you committed to "set nothing wicked before my eyes..."

Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye." In other words, what enters through the eye incites the body, and fills the mind, and permeates the heart. Purity begins even before your mind - it begins with your eyes. Why provide your mind the garbage that stimulates the evil thoughts you'll have to battle? It's better to determine that you'll set nothing wicked before your eyes...

The Hebrew word that's translated, "wicked" doesn't just speak of what's evil. The word means "*worthless*". Some material is not evil, per se - but it's worthless - it's a trivial pursuit - a distraction - a waste of time. Guys, time is a gift from God, and we're called to be a good steward of our time. Use it wisely. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of." Steer clear of both the wicked and worthless.

PSALM 97: THE FEAR OF GOD

Psalm 97 teaches us that God is not a person to neglect or slight. Listen to verses 3-5, "A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."

It reminds me of the new High School teacher. That summer he had been in an auto accident, and reported to school the first day with his upper torso in a cast. Of course, the students didn't realize it since the cast was under the teacher's shirt.

On that first day, as class began, the teacher opened the window to let in the stiff breeze. The wind was so strong it started flapping the teacher's tie. But it didn't faze the teacher. He simply grabbed the stapler on his desk, and tacked his tie to his chest with a couple of staples. From that moment on, no one messed with new teacher. A guy who staples his tie to his shirt is one tough teacher!

This should be the result of reading Psalm 97. God is not a person with which to trifle. Don't mess around with God. Respect Him, reverence Him. Put away your idols, and worship the Lord alone. Fear the Lord, and keep His commandments. Verse 10 tells us, "You who love the LORD, hate evil!"