

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Following our study of the three kings, Saul, David and Solomon, let's take a look at the writings of David and Solomon as found in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. For this week, Old Testament Survey focuses on the book of Psalms.



Praising God and seeking God go hand in hand in the book of Psalms. Representing some of the most powerful poetry in the world, it is a book worth reading over and over again. I once heard Reverend Charles Stanley challenge everyone to do nothing but read Psalm 1 at least once each day for thirty days and see if, by the end, it didn't impact their life in a profound way.

So let's consider this most powerful, and yet most touching, book of songs and praises.

1. Look up the following sets of verses and note what each set has in common. How many "books" or divisions are contained within the psalms?
 - a. Psalm 41:13, Psalm 72:19, Psalm 89:52, Psalm 106:48, and all of Psalm 150.
 - i. ANSWER: The first set of psalms all signal the end of each division or book of Psalms within the overall book. Additionally, they end each section with a "Hallelujah" chorus - a praise to God. Furthermore, the last psalm, Psalm 150, in its entirety is a praise.
 - b. Psalm 1:1, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 73:1, Psalm 90:1, and Psalm 107:1
 - i. ANSWER 1: The second set of psalms represents the first verse in each book, or division, within the overall book of Psalms.
 - ii. ANSWER 2: There are five divisions, or books, as outlined above.
2. Over how long a period of time were the Psalms written? The actual book was assembled by priests after the return of the Jews from exile, in 536 BC.
 - a. Read Psalm 90. Who wrote that prayer and when did he die?
 - i. ANSWER: Moses wrote this prayer. From [Lesson 2](#) of our Survey, we know that he died in 1406 BC.
 - b. Read Psalm 126. Who is being returned, and from where? When did this happen? Using the two dates from these two Psalms, we can get a range of years covered by the Psalms. What is that range?
 - i. ANSWER: The material within the book of Psalms would range from at least the year of Moses' death, 1406 BC, until at least the year of the return of the exiles from Babylon in 536 BC, when the book itself was assembled. Thus, the period covered by Psalms would encompass a range of approximately 900 years.
3. Much of Hebrew poetry, including the Psalms, uses something called parallelism. Write out a short definition of "parallelism".
 - a. ANSWER: Parallelism means a parallel or comparison, and can be more of a play on words. Hebrew poetry will often use parallel ideas to express a specific thought.

4. There are four types of parallelism in Hebrew poetry: (1) Synonymous (Psalm 2:1-4, for example), (2) Emblematic (the 23rd Psalm and the 42nd Psalm, for example), (3) Synthetic (Psalm 1, for example), and (4) Antithetical (used primarily in Proverbs, see Proverbs 10:1 and on). Write a short definition of each of these below.
 - a. Synonymous Parallelism:
 - i. ANSWER: Two ideas or lines which mean the same thing, or say the same thing another way. The major and minor prophets employed this form of parallelism quite often.
 - b. Emblematic Parallelism:
 - i. ANSWER: In this style, a line is stated and then a picture is painted.
 - c. Synthetic Parallelism:
 - i. ANSWER: An idea is taken and expanded upon as an extended telescope gets larger and larger each time it is pulled out farther and farther.
 - d. Antithetical Parallelism:
 - i. ANSWER: In this form of parallelism, a thesis is given followed by an antithesis; "wise and foolish" for example.
5. The numerous Psalms that David wrote can be placed in one of three categories. Read the following Psalms, all written by David, and see if you can define the category that they fall into.
 - a. Psalm 21 and Psalm 22
 - i. ANSWER: Praising God
 - b. Psalm 38, Psalm 70 and Psalm 78
 - i. ANSWER: Reminding God, or bringing something to God's attention
 - c. Psalm 18 and 30
 - i. ANSWER: Giving thanks to God
6. Using the three categories of Psalms you identified above how would you implement a worship service?
 - a. ANSWER: There are many possible approaches. Here is one: At the beginning of the worship service a series of Psalms could be read which praise God for being God, along with Psalms which focus on the glory and holiness of God. This could be followed by Psalms which would remind God of his promises and His word to us, and petition God to be the sole source who meets all of our needs. The service could then conclude with a series of Psalms praising God and giving thanksgiving to him for having met all of our needs and for being the great God he is.

The book of Psalms is one of my most cherished and favorite books in the Bible. It consoles me, lifts me up, reminds me of the greatness and holiness of God, and it speaks of His tender mercies.

May He bless all of us these next weeks as we continue our study.

In Christ,

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