

## Week Three Books I-II of the Psalter

An Opening Observation from Augustine:

Note what Augustine said, “The sequence of the Psalms, which seems to me to contain the secret of a mighty mystery, has not yet been revealed to me.” (*Enarrationes* on Psalm 150)

### CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM LAST WEEK [15 mins]

#### *Psalms 1-2*

- The subject of Psalms 1-2 is a righteous and royal figure
- He is granted military dominance over wicked rulers from his seat on Mt Zion
- Though the judgment of the wicked is promised (1.5-6), the scheming nations have revolted against Yhwh and his king (2.1-3)
- This is only a temporary rebellion, as the King will cause their way to perish (2.8-12) just as he had promised (1.5-6)
  
- What we didn't mention last week that is critical to the book
  - o “Today I have begotten you” is a reference to 2 Samuel 7.14 and the covenant

#### *Psalms 146-150*

- READ SUMMARY FROM SLIDES
- Psalm 145:18-21
  - o Who is God near to?
    - Those who cry out to him with sincerity
  - o What does He do with their cries?
    - He hears them, and saves those who make them
  - o Who does the Lord watch over?
    - Those who love him
  - o Who does God destroy?
    - The wicked
  - o So now what?
    - Let us praise the Lord with our mouth
    - Let all flesh bless his holy Name forever and ever

### *What's the significance?*

- The chief lamenter in the psalms is King David, to whom the promises were made
  - The topics of David's laments are the apparent non-judgment of the wicked (1.6; 2.10-12), and for God to arise and act on behalf of the righteous (starting in Ps 3)
  - These kinds of psalms reveal great trust in God's promises, based on the simple fact that they are prayed
  - The superscriptions also raise the question of Son-ship in Books I-II, as Ps 3,7, and 72 all refer to a son of David
- The introduction advises such petitioners in the following way:
  - There will be a final judgment in which the righteous will arise and the wicked will be destroyed
  - There will be a descendant of David will reign from Zion, and who will inherit the entire world
  - Rulers and judges of the earth are warned to be wise and not rebel against the Lord and his Anointed One
  - If they, and us with them heed this warning, we will join the company of the righteous, who will participate in the blessings of the King (1.1, 2.12)
- The Psalter then, is leading us on a journey
  - The journey begins with the telling of God's plans and purposes for history
  - The journey continues with noticing that sometimes the world as we know it does not match up with the world as God has explained it (or has promised it will be)
    - A lot likes Job's story, or the story of Qohelet in Ecclesiastes
  - The characters in the story begin to question God on his promises – is this really the way it is, and if so, how can it be? Why has God not acted on behalf of his people and his promises?
  - God responds by saying that it is the way it is, and that we tend to not view time in the same way God views time
  - The only thing we are left to do is praise God for his Being and his Ways

### **BOOK-BY-BOOK THROUGH THE PSALTER**

- Through the Valley (Books I-II)
  - In book I we find psalms of David, mostly of him wrestling with God about the realities of Psalms 1-2; interspersed throughout these psalms, however, one can hear the voice of the Davidic King, who is the righteous Man from Psalm 1.1
  - In book II we also hear similar Psalms from David, but we also have several psalms from his appointed musicians/prophets, the Sons of Korah and Asaph.
  - These books, then, represent the historical response of the community who first received the Davidic covenant and struggled to see its fulfillment
- Into the Thicket (Book III)
  - Book III is the lowest and darkest point in the Psalter – the Temple is destroyed, the monarchy has been uprooted, Israel has gone into exile, and the people of God have

deep concerns about the state of the Davidic covenant – is there a future for David and for Israel?

- Signs of the Clearing (Book IV)
  - Book IV is the initial response of the community to the challenge of Book III
  - Much like the response of the Sons of Korah earlier (42-49), the past actions of God with Moses and the earlier generations of Israel are brought into light, along with the theological claim that the Lord is still enthroned on Zion
  - We hear again from David, and hope for the future seems to be in the air
- Ascending the Mountain (Book V)
  - Book V opens up with a celebration of the return from exile (107-109), a prophetic glimpse into the future monarchy (110), a reminder of the righteous (119) who can ascend the mountain of God (120-134) which is surrounded by praise (111-118, 135-137), and a final collection of Davidic psalms focused on the praise of God (138-145)
  - We ascend the hill of the Lord in these psalms, ending with a command to and the accomplishing of the whole of creation giving praise to its Creator and Redeemer (146-150), who upholds the realities of his judgments (c.f. Ps 1-2)

### **TIME CHECK: 6:45**

**QUESTION: In your own reading of Books 1-2, have you noticed anything along these lines? (15 mins)**

- Spend time going over what the class has noticed so far in their own reading

### **TIME CHECK: 7:00**

#### **KEY WORDS IN BOOKS I-II**

- One of the key words: “refuge” or “trust” (2.12)
  - Used to begin psalms
    - ✦ 7.1, “Yhwh my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me.”
    - ✦ 16.1, “Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.”
    - ✦ See also: 11.1; 31.1; 46.1; 57.1; 71.1
  - Used within a psalm
    - ✦ 5.11, “Let all who take refuge in you rejoice!”
    - ✦ 17.7, “Display the wonders of your steadfast love, Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand”
    - ✦ See also: 14.6; 18.2, 30; 25.20; 31.19; 34.8-22; 36.7; 37.40; 61.3-4; 62.7-8; 64.10; 71.7
- The usage of ‘refuge’ suggests it as a key lesson for Books I-II – it speaks both about Yahweh and his people

- “Blessing” – From *sr* in 1.1 and 2.12 and *brk* in 3.8
  - The same *sr* found near end of Book 1 (32.1; 33.12; 34.8; 40.4; 41.1) and only once in Book 2 (65.4)
  - The other word for blessing (*brk*) is found much more often
    - ✦ Book 1 (3.8; 5.12; 10.3; 16.7; 18.46; 21.3; 24.5; 26.12; 28.6; 29.11; 31.21; 34.1; 37.22, 26; 41.13)
    - ✦ Book 2 (45.2; 49.18; 62.4; 63.4; 65.10; 66.8; 67.1; 68.19)
  - Importantly, Psalm 72 (15, 17, 18, 19)
- “Steadfast Love” (17.7; 18.50) from Hebrew *hshd* (חֲסֵד)
  - Its uses in Book 1 (5.7; 6.4; 13.5; 21.7; 23.6; 25.6; 26.3; 31.7; 32.10; 33.5; 36.5; 40.10)
  - Its uses in Book 2 (42.8; 44.26; 48.9; 51.1; 52.1; 57.3; 59.10, 16, 17; 61.7; 62.12; 63.3; 66.20; 69.13, 16)

## FOLLOWING THE KING THROUGH PSALM 72

*How do we follow the king?*

- The Davidic king subtly dominates the book of Psalms
- Key Questions
  - Which psalms are ‘royal’ psalms? Does a Davidic title make it royal?
  - Is it significant that most of the ‘royal’ psalms are near puzzle edges?
  - Is the king speaking? Sometimes? Always? Never?
  - What does the royal theme in the psalms have to do with us today?
- Royal psalms
  - Psalms which are usually considered royal are: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132
  - There are many psalms, however, scattered throughout the Psalter which draw upon kingship themes and ideals
  - Even one of the most form-critical scholars, Mowinckel, said, “[There are] many Individual-Laments in which the I is not just an ‘Everyman’, but the king of the people.”
- At the edges
  - At very prominent places we find royal psalms: 1-2, 45-48, 69, 72, 89, 101, 110
  - These psalms follow the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy, giving the community of readers a question of whether or not the covenant still applies (89)
  - Book V announces quite loudly through its royal psalms (‘of David’) that hope remains
- Who is speaking?
  - The anonymous “I”, not necessarily the historical David speaking
  - What are the most common circumstances?
    - The enemies of the speaker are often foreign nations
    - The deliverance of the speaker has national repercussions
    - Yhwh’s glory is bound up with the fate of the speaker
  - These make the king the most likely speaker in many of the anonymous I psalms

- Our 'default position'
  - The Davidic superscriptions suggest, at face value, something kingly going on in these psalms
  - With the puzzle edges being so concerned with the king, we should expect many psalms within the puzzle to be kingly as well
- Who is reading?
  - A democratization of the text
    - "The words written by a specific individual grounded in specific circumstances can be appropriated by all people in a wide variety of circumstances as they adopt the expression of the psalmist's thoughts and emotions to reflect their own."
    - The grounds for doing this, I think, are Psalm 1.1 and 2.12
  - So, we can have psalms which are *primarily* about the passing on and state of the Davidic covenant, which can be *secondarily* expressed as the voice of those who trust in that King for God to make his reign over his creation more visible
- Following the King – SEE PASSAGES ON SLIDES