

The Movement and Message of the Hebrew Psalter



AN OVERVIEW ON WHAT IT MEANS TO READ
THE BOOK OF PSALMS AS A BOOK

WEEK 4
THE MOVEMENT OF BOOKS 3 AND 4

Looking back



“The reader is invited not only to trust the LORD with David and like David, but also to trust the LORD because of David and through David....God works in and through David to claim the world for his kingship. The reign of the LORD is at stake in the destiny of David.”

✦ James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 124.

Looking back

“It is easy to read the Old Testament and come away thinking these books are only about God’s specific dealings with the people of Israel **in the past**. But their purpose was not merely to inform us of those events. They reveal God’s eternal plan as it played out in Israel’s past. **The past was the divine canvas on which God painted his plans for the future**. The prophetic word is full of pictures that teach its readers about God’s plans and purposes for Israel’s future.”

✦ John Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 47.

Books III-IV

- Psalm 72 as an introduction, if you will
- The significance of book 3 – Into the Thicket
 - Questions of Why? How long? When?
 - The voice of a righteous man rises out of a rebellious nation
 - This righteous one suffers along with the nation, but he is taken into the realms of death before being rescued
 - The throne of this king is indistinguishable from God’s throne
- The significance of book 4 – A Sign of a Clearing
 - The life of man is but a breath, it is good to refuge in God
 - The reign of the Lord (*Adonai Melek*; 93.1; 96.10; 97.1; 98.6; 99.1) is the same reign talked about in Book III
 - Our response while we take refuge (101-106)

Psalms 73-78

- Something has gone wrong in Israel
- Instead of the situation of Psalm 72, Israel has joined with the wicked, leaving only a remnant behind who are faithful (such as the psalmist) [73.10-15]
- Israel is judged, as such, and the Temple has been destroyed by foreign nations [74.1-3]
- Israel responds by asking God “how long” this will continue and demands justice, the kind of justice from Ps 72 [74.9-10]
- God responds that he will judge, not between Israel and the nations, but between the righteous and the wicked [Ps 75-76]
- The psalmist is perplexed by the circumstances, and looks to the past for present hope and comfort [Ps 77-78]

Psalms 79-83

- Israel is ready to learn the lesson from their history
- If they would but repent and listen to God and walk in his ways, then their enemies would be subdued
- They desire this, and they also desire that God would raise up “the man of his right hand” (80.17) and establish the kingdom of Psalm 72
- So the Lord challenges them, especially their leaders, to listen to the Lord, and if not, they will fall just as the princes of the nations
- When they pray for judgment on the nations, they pray that judgment would lead to knowing God

Psalms 84-89

- Psalm 83 ended with the judgment of the nations (in terms of Ps 1-2) so that they might seek his name and know him
- Psalm 84 is a song of pilgrimage to Zion – the walk (84.6) is contrasted to the wicked (81.13; 82.5; 83.4)
- The people long for this day (Ps 85), and pray that God would bring it about through his servant (Ps 86)
- Psalms 84 and 87 both give us a glimpse at the future
- Psalms 88-89 contrast the hope of 84-87, asking:
 - Who is the immortal one to rise from the dead?
 - When will he appear?

Psalms 90-92

- This group of psalms responds to the continued ‘How long?’ and ‘Why?’ questions from Book III
- Psalm 90 says that God views time differently and that the people are to take refuge in God
- Who is 91.1 about? It could be the suffering Davidic king from Ps 88-89 – this would make Jesus’ wilderness suffering more logical
- Psalm 92 prepares us for 93-100 by lifting up the Anointed King, whose reign is celebrated along with the Lord’s in the psalms to follow

Psalms 93-100

- Focus is on the reign of God and his Anointed one from Ps 92
- These psalms point to this eschatological reign
- The 'new song' is to be sung, comparable to Exodus 15, looking a new order of redemption that is greater than its predecessor [Ps 93, 95-99]
- Even ancient Jewish interpretation understood these psalms as eschatological
- Note, by Psalm 100 the theme that knowledge of Israel's God has spread among the nations

Psalms 101-106

- This is the so-called "repentance" section of Book IV
- Psalms 101 and 103 are "David" songs in which we may hear the voice of the future David, which we may also hear in Psalm 102
- 104-106 celebrate the Creator and Redeemer God who reigns over the whole earth, meant to encourage the people

Take away...

