

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - December 8, 2022

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD, D.Min.

Title: Introduction To The Book of Psalms - Part IX

I. Introduction

A. Thank you once again for being a part of the study sessions involving the Book of Psalms. My continuing prayer is that you are being blessed.

B. This lesson will conclude our Introduction to the Psalms for this calendar year (2022). There is so much more that I desire to share with you concerning the Psalms and if the Lord blesses us to enter into a New Year, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, I will see what area of study to proceed with next.

C. Alright, lets move right into this study session with an open heart and mind, and let us expect another blessing as we go through this material.

II. Psalms of Liturgy

A. Songs of liturgy are the least discrete category because they can always be classified as one or another of the types of songs already considered.

B. Most are songs of praise or thanksgiving although there are also, a number of petition - prayers among them. However, they all have certain formal characteristics, suggesting that they were always sung on a particular occasion of public, corporate worship.

C. This may have been at one of the appointed religious feasts or

festivals, such as the Feast of Tabernacles, or during a regular gathering for worship at the temple.

D. The main characteristic of a liturgical hymn is its arrangement: Certain clauses and parallel lines (couplets) which are repeated (usually exactly) from time to time within the psalm.

E. These reiterated clauses are called "refrains" or "antiphonal dialogue." It is believed that the refrains indicate points when either the whole congregation or a selected chorus was to respond in unison to what the worship leader had just spoken.

F. These words - whether solemn and dignified, or joyous and enthusiastic - are words of petition, thanksgiving, praise, instruction, or profession directed to a Holy and Righteous God, who was viewed as being immediately present with them, as they were gathered for worship in His name.

G. In addition to helping emphasize the message, the repeated lines also serve an organizational function, indicating the psalm's major divisions.

H. There are a number of psalms in the Psalter that stand out as having a recognizable liturgical structure, especially suitable for public worship. Among this group are Psalms 15, 24, 42-43, 47, 49, 50, 56, 57, 59, 75, 81, 85, 115, 118, 121, 124, and 136.

I. Other psalms or portions of psalms may also have been used during special ceremonies. For example, Psalm 67 could celebrate a harvest, and Psalm 68 would make a good processional hymn of victory in battle.

J. Other groups of psalms appear to be dedicated to a particular topic of religious importance, such as those in praise of Zion (e.g., 46, 48, 76, 84, 87), or the "Pilgrimage Songs" (120-134), also

known as "Songs of Ascent," which worshipers sang as they went "up" to Jerusalem to attend one of the annual religious celebrations in the temple.

K. The content of the psalm itself often gives an indication of its particular liturgical function, such as the "Entrance Psalms" (15 and 24) and the "Psalms of Blessing" (91 and 121).

L. It also seems likely that Psalm 118:27 would have been particularly appropriate for use during the Feast of Tabernacles (see Lev. 23:40-43).

III. The Importance of Genre in the Study of The Psalms

A. Do you remember this word "**genre**" which was introduced in Part II (Oct. 13, 2022) of our study session? Please review Roman Numeral **III - Categorizing The Psalms According to Genre**, (Page 3). The term is pronounced "**Jaan-ruh**" and it means "**class**" or "**type**."

B. Genre analysis has been emphasized for two reasons: First, understanding the different categories of psalms shows Bible students how skillfully the psalms have been composed.

C. Second, we are now able to see that the original authors had specific intentions in mind as they composed their poetic works for religious communication.

D. They wanted their prayer-songs to shape the *motives* and stimulate the *emotions* of the people who listened to them so that they would feel the same joy, wonder, sadness, frustration, or anger which the psalmist himself felt as he wrote.

E. The psalmist's feeling, or set of shifting feelings, corresponds

to, or harmonizes with the specific purpose for which the psalm was written - the **five primary functional aims** being prayer, thanksgiving, praise, instruction, and profession of trust. //Do you recall these?//

F. There is, of course, a communicative purpose (at least one) behind every discourse, spoken or written. In other words, the author intends his message to "mean" more than just what the words say.

G. He is also transmitting his feelings, attitudes, and intentions in a manner which corresponds to his audience's knowledge, problems, needs, values, and desires. He does this by formulating his words in a particular way, that is, by using an appropriate style and suitable structural framework.

H. He fits the form of the message to the total circumstances of the communication event. (An example of fitting the form of a message to the total circumstances can be seen in the difference between a popular chorus sung by a Mass Choir at a public worship service, and by a mother singing it as a lullaby to a child in her arms.)

I. The "discourses" of Scripture embody specific functions according to the type of literature they are (e.g., history, laws, proverbs, prophecy) and their different addresses (e.g., Old or New Testament, Jews or Gentiles, Hebrew - or Greek-speakers, righteous or wicked, etc.).

J. This aspect of the communication situation is a vital part of any Scripture texts' message. It is part of the total ***meaning-package***.

K. In Psalm 36, there is a sudden shift in attitude and emotion as

you move from verse 4 to verse 5. The sorrow and disgust that the psalmist feels as he thinks about the pride of the wicked in verses 1-4, suddenly changes to joyous wonder as he considers the amazing attributes of God in verses 5-9.

L. In a similar way, the declarative and descriptive utterances which are predominate in the first two sections of the psalm, give way to fervent petitions in the final portion (vv 10-12).

It is once again interactive time. I am only giving you two questions and I pray that you will be sufficiently challenged.

1. Examine Psalms 12, 24, 66, 84, 115, 118 and 122. Which one of the five major psalm types do they represent - a song of petition, thanksgiving, praise, instruction, or profession of trust?
2. Carefully study Psalm 42 and 43. Note the verses that are repeated in these two personal petition songs. (They are really one song.) There are three principal sets of repetition: A **major** refrain, which occurs three times, and two **minor** refrains, each of which occurs twice. Write down the verse number of each refrain:

Major refrain: _____ Minor refrain A: _____

Minor refrain B: _____

I pray that you have been blessed and thank you once again for sharing in this study session.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin