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## GABC Ames, Foundations

### Psalms

#### "The Songs of the Messiah for the People of the Messiah"

Ruth is about returning from exile, and finding life and refuge in Boaz, who points to David, who points to the coming Son of David.

The Psalms are about the pain of **exile** and alienation from God, and the hope of **restoration** and reconciliation through the coming Son of David.

Steven Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, "[In the Psalms] the answer to the problem of exile is David... the canonical structure of the Psalms thus clearly develops the prophetic theme of a renewed earth under a Davidic leader," (Dempster, 201-202).

#### The Psalms are first and foremost about **Jesus**.

Every time that the Bible quotes a Psalm it is used in relation to Jesus. See Matthew 22:41-45 (Ps. 110), Acts 2:24-28 (Ps. 16), Hebrews 1:5-13 (Pss. 2, 104, 45, 102, 110), **Acts 1:15-20 (Ps. 69, Ps. 109, cf. Ps. 41:9, Ps. 7:14-16)**.

Three questions you should ask about any given Psalm (in this order):

- How is this Psalm about **Jesus**? Is it from him? To him? About him?
- How is this Psalm about **the church** in Jesus?
- How is this Psalm about **me** in Jesus?

(Think about the "in him" language of the New Testament: Redeemed in Christ (Romans 3:26, Ephesians 1:7), Brought near in Christ (Ephesians 2:13), New Creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), Chosen in Christ (Ephesians 1:4), Adopted in Christ (Galatians 3:26))

### STRUCTURE

Five books

- I. 1-41; II. 42-72; III. 73-89; IV. 90-106; V. 107-150.
- Each ends with a doxology, Psalm 150 is a doxology for the whole Psalter.
- Books 1 and 2 are lament heavy, books 4 and 5 are praise heavy.

Authorship [Grisanti, *Word and the World*, 514.]

- 100 of 150 have titles that likely indicate authorship
- **Moses** - 1 Psalm (Ps. 90)
- David - 73 Psalms (Mostly in Bk. I and II)
- **Solomon** - 2 Psalms (Ps. 72, 127)
- Asaph - 12 Psalms (Ps. 50, 73-83)
- Sons of Korah - 10 Psalms (Ps. 42, 44-49, 84-88, 87)
- Heman the Ezrahite - 1 Psalm (Ps. 88)
- Ethan the Ezrahite - 1 Psalm (89)

Three **Major** Categories of Psalms

- **Praise** - songs that focus on some (or multiple) attribute of God and give him praise, often as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. God's sovereignty in creation, redemption, and the ongoing providence of life is emphasized in these. Praise usually includes statement of hope or confidence. (eg. 8, 29, 33, 146-150).
- **Lament** - appeal to God for help in the middle of distress and suffering. Laments usually follow the pattern: (1) cry to God, (2) lament present circumstance, (3) confess trust in God, (4) plead for divine intervention, (5) vow praise in response to anticipated intervention. (eg. 22, 74, 88, 130).
- **Thanksgiving** - expresses the pain and sorrow of suffering, but as a past-tense reality. Main theme is gratitude for God's past-tense deliverance from suffering and sorrow. (eg. 104, 107, 116, 136)

Other important categories

- **Royal** Psalms - "These Psalms focus on the king of Israel and depict him as God's representative through whom He rules over His chosen people... He epitomizes God's reign," [516]. "These psalms set a high standard for every Davidic descendant who would become king. They envision an 'ideal Davidic ruler'... However, no Davidic descendant measured up to this divine standard. This 'nonfulfillment' in the reigns of all the Davidic kings who ruled over Israel created an expectation of some future king who might rule in this manner," [517].
- **Enthronement** Psalms - Psalms about God being the true king of his people (eg. 93, 95-99)

- **Wisdom** Psalms - how to live a good and godly life under God's reign. (eg. 1, 37, 73, 112, 119, 127)
- **Messianic** Psalms - like Royal Psalms, but more intense. (eg. 2, 16, 22, 72, 110)

## THEOLOGY

One of the most theologically pregnant books in the Bible - perhaps the book that reflects the most on God's **nature** and attributes in and of himself.

- E.g. Psalm 36:9 - "with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light."
- Primarily emphasizes God's works and character [John Crutchfield, *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, 355]
  - Works
    - Creation - eg. Ps. 8, 19
    - Redemption - eg. Ps. 3, 34, 40, 51
    - Sovereignty over lives and nations (history) - eg. 2, 33, 102, 115
  - Character
    - Righteous (7:10, 12, 17; 11:7; 33:5; 35:28; 36:6; 71:15-16, 19; 89:14; 98:2; 111:3; 116:15; 119:137; 145:17)
    - Good (13:6; 25:7-8; 34:8; 54:6; 73:1, 28; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1, 116:7; 118:1, 29; 119:68; 135:3; 136:1; 145:9)
    - Faithful (33:4; 36:5; 57:10; 71:22; 86:15; 91:4; 100:5; 115:1; 117:2; 119:90; 145:13; 146:6)
    - Strong (24:8; 62:11; 65:6; 66:3; 68:34-35; 89:9; 93:4; 99:4; 147:5)
    - Great (48:1; 77:13; 86:10; 95:3; 96:4; 99:2-3; 104:1; 135:5; 145:3; 147:5)
    - Holy (22:3; 71:22; 77:13; 99)
    - Forgiving (86:5; 99:8; 103:3; 130:4)
    - Steadfast in Love (13:5; 32:10; 33:5; 36:7; 48:9; 52:8; 130:7).

## REDEMPTION

- **Centers** Christian life on Christ and **locates** it within the covenant community - first four Psalms paint the picture of the covenant life as covenant under the suffering and victorious King.
- Christ is the focal point of God's **rule** in history - Psalm 2
- Christ is the focal point of God's **blessing** (salvation) in history - Psalm 1
- Christ's sufferings make way for our **resurrection** and life - Psalm 22
- The Christian life is in the context of the **congregation** of the righteous (Ps 1:5)

## APPLICATION

Application

- Helps us to **praise** Christologically - he is the focal point of creation, redemption, and providence
- Helps us to **lament** Christologically - he too went through horrible suffering, both undeserved, and for sin, like us, except it was our sin, not his. So, when we call out for rescue in hope, we hope alongside Christ.
- Helps us **give thanks** Christologically - like God delivered Christ from death and sin, so he has and will deliver us.
- Pushes us towards life under the **Messiah**, in his covenant community, **the church**.

## EXERCISE

Read one of these Psalms and categorize it according to the seven categories listed above, then discuss how this Psalm applies (1) to Christ, (2) to the church, (3) to individuals.  
Choose from Psalms 1, 2, 22, 23, 72, 145.