

Yahweh Malak Psalms

'The LORD Reigns' - Psalms 93-99

STUDY ONE - INTRODUCTION

Ray Bell ~ 27th August, 2015

The PSALMS are DIFFERENT to so much of the rest of Scripture

- They are POETRY... not narrative,
 - o although they do tell us of stories, people, places and historical events.
- They are NOT like Paul's NT letters... filled with doctrinal, logical arguments, pastoral matters and gospel presentation and exhortation,
 - o although they DO provide good and true theology and ways to live under the covenant care and protection of God.
- They ARE far more contemplative, emotive and personal than much of the rest of Scripture
 - o which is why many believers turn to them for their own prayers and encouragement, finding in the psalms, a way to express their own thoughts and emotions.

One of the AMAZING and UNIQUE things about the psalms is that so many of them were originally the words of God's people *TO GOD*, but are now God's word *TO US!*

The psalms are not only devotional and emotional... they are also DIDACTIC! - i.e. they are good for TEACHING!

- JESUS adopted the psalms in his own prayers
- They are also "*useful*," as Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work...*"
- They were written personally, but not only for personal use
- Many have been written *especially* for the community. And the fact they have ALL been *compiled* into a 'hymnbook' MAKES THEM corporate! This also makes them *available* for personal use and encouragement. (*Have you ever just read through the hymnbook for your own personal encouragement, reading and prayers!?*)

The Structure of the Psalter

Of the 150 psalms in the Psalter, not all them were written by David, and even those (73) with the superscription 'Of David' may have been written 'to', 'for', 'of', 'on behalf of' David.

The book of psalms is in fact 'a collection' of psalms which has been compiled, at some stage, *well after* many of the individual psalms themselves were written.

There are FIVE BOOKS of psalms within the Psalter. (*some suggest a mimicking of the Pentateuch!*)

Book I (1-41); Book II (42-72) (*end of the Prayers of David - demonstrating a very INTENTIONAL grouping of those two books within the Psalter, and perhaps even the end of the FIRST collection of Psalms*) Book III (73-89); Book IV (90-106); Book V (107-150).

Books I-III are almost definitely written and compiled BEFORE the exiles... whilst Books IV and V have been compiled during, or after, the Babylonian exile. That is, AFTER Israel had been deported from the land, Jerusalem was defeated and the temple destroyed. *These events provide an all important background and context for the psalms we are studying this term.*

Each of the five books of the Psalter ends with a *doxology*. And the Psalter as a whole, ends with FIVE psalms of praise - providing '*a crescendo of praise*' to conclude the psalms.

A lens or two...

Psalms 1 and 2 are not just the first psalms in the Psalter. These two psalms serve as an introduction to the entire Psalter itself. They function as a *prologue* to the Psalms, providing a "hermeneutic" or framework of interpretation for us to consider as we read the psalms.

As a 'torah' psalm, (together with Ps 19 and 119) Psalm 1 presents two ways to live:

- The way of the righteous, who DELIGHT in the law of God, and the FRUIT of such a life (vv1-3);
- OR, the way of the wicked, and the 'fruit' of that way of life also (vv4-6).

Psalm 2 also serves as an introduction to the Psalter introducing the very theme of our series this term - that of the kingship of the LORD and his anointed.

The 'Story' of the Psalter

Whilst some scholars work hard to convince themselves and others that there are connections throughout the Psalter that most of us cannot see, there *are* some clear and convincing threads or 'storylines' we can follow in the Psalter. The position of the 'Yahweh Malak' psalms in Book IV in particular, and the psalms which conclude Book III are worthy of some comment, and seem to be far more than mere coincidence in their placement.

Psalm 88 is a lament psalm, which, unlike any other lament in the psalms (and there are many!) has no mention or glimmer of hope whatsoever. Everything seems to have gone pear-shaped!

Psalm 89 follows, and sings of the covenant the LORD has made with his chosen one, with David his servant, to establish his offspring forever. It goes on to declare praise to the LORD and to speak of his faithfulness and steadfast love. But then things take a turn for the worst! It's as if all the praise and wonder and glory and joy of the first thirty-seven verses are there *simply to heighten the contrast* with the *present reality* for the psalmist.

And THAT is the end of Book 3! - Jerusalem has fallen; the temple is no more; there is no Davidic king on the throne; and the promises of God seem to be entirely UNfulfilled! It is as if the LORD has forsaken his covenant and his people (89:38-51)

Across the 'seam' and into Book IV

The first psalm of Book IV (**Psalm 90**) is a song of *Moses*. Why?!

Because the very reason for the exiles, and the very truth the people of the exile need to hear, is that no man can replace God, the LORD as King!

And so, in Book IV of the Psalter, Israel returns to the truth - '*YOU, O LORD... YOU have been our dwelling place... in ALL generations*' (90:1)

Psalm 91 also speaks of the LORD being our dwelling place - our shelter, refuge and fortress! Not Jerusalem, not the city gates, or walls, or even the temple, but the LORD himself! And **Psalm 92**, as a song of praise and thanksgiving, declares the steadfast love and faithfulness of the LORD, telling of his works and his righteousness.

AND SO NOW...

...Israel is ready, and we are ready to declare with one voice - "*Yahweh Malak!*" - "*The LORD reigns! He is robed in majesty!*"