

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, September 4, 2016

Passages: Various Psalms

Memory Passage: Psalm 2:10-12

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Psalms 1, 2 & 41.** This week we will examine the message found in the arrangement of the entire Psalter. Remember that the individual Psalms were written by various authors over the period of app. 1000 years, but the book of Psalms as we have it today was compiled probably in the 4th century B.C. Mark Futato suggests one way to understand the message of the book of Psalms is to see in its 5-book arrangement the history of Israel in relation to her kings/King. In the questions that follow I am influenced by Futato's approach found in *Transformed by Praise: The Purpose and Message of the Psalms* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2002), 114-57. I have included his headings for each book in Day 5.

- (b) On what basis is David assured that God is still pleased with him, and how do Psalms 1 & 2 provide this assurance?
- (c) What is the state of Israel & her king, David, at the end of Book I?

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Psalm 72.** Who is the author of Psalm 72, and what is his relationship to David?

(b) What 3 themes are echoed in Psalm 72 from Psalms 1, 2, & 41? The themes are roughly found in these verses: (1) vs. 4, 12-14; (2) vs. 8-11; (3) vs. 3, 6-7, 16-17.

- (c) What is the state of Israel & her king, Solomon, at the end of Book II?

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Psalms 88 & 89.** Psalm 88 starts and ends with hopelessness and despair. Why do you suppose this darkest of all Psalms has been placed here, the penultimate Psalm of Book III?

(b) What truths from Psalm 2 & 2 Samuel 7 are echoed in Psalm 89:3-4, 19-37?

- (c) Even though the promises of God have been rehearsed, what is the reality described in vs. 38-51?
- (d) What is the state of Israel and David's throne at the end of Book III?

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Psalm 89:1-2, 91:1-2, 9-10, 92:12-14, 93:1-2, 94:14-15; 95:3-5, 96:10, 91:1, 8-9, 98:1-9, & 99:1-5.** Book III ends with no king on the throne and asks a question that arises from this unthinkable reality: "Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?" (89:49). How does the beginning of Book IV answer this question (91:1-2) and what significance is there to the fact that the compilers placed a "Prayer of Moses" as the first Psalm in Book IV (and 6 of the 7 occurrences of "Moses" in the Psalms occur in Book IV).

(b) According to these verses (and we could look at many more), what are the faithful exhorted to do while they are in exile, and upon what basis should they do it?

(c) A bit of help from Futato: "Do you see how book 4 responds to the question raised in Psalm 89? Book 4 responds with a sustained emphasis on the truth that God is still King and God still reigns over the world that he has made. No other group of psalms anywhere in the Book of Psalms contains this sustained emphasis on the kingship of God. This cluster of psalms that follows Psalm 89 teaches us to live by faith that God reigns, even when all of the evidence of life appears to contradict that truth. The truth stands. The Lord reigns. We live by faith" (Futato, *Transformed by Praise*, 123).

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Psalm 119:1-8, 97-104, 161-168, & Psalm 132.** Book V continues Book IV's focus on faith in the reigning Lord but adds obedience to the life of faith. Psalm 119 is the centerpiece of Book V. "The word *torah* occurs twenty-five times in this Psalm, and related words occur in 174 or 176 verses" (Futato, 125). From the 24 verses I assigned (13.6% of its 176 verses), explain what obedience for the faithful in exile included, and how this obedience should manifest in your own life.

(b) Another expression of obedience is in our praise, the overarching theme in Psalms 145-150 that closes Book V and the entire Psalter. I won't make you read or answer questions on these Psalms, but I hope you are intrigued and read them anyway!

(c) Another answer in Book V to how one should live in the absence of a king on David's throne is found in Psalm 132. Explain what the people are asking of the Lord and on what foundation they are asking (vs. 1-10), and the Lord's response (vs. 11-18).

(d) Why were the people able to request such a thing (132:10)? See Psalm 96:11-13, 98:7-9, and 118:25-27 (and NT quotations of Psalm 118 as understood by the NT church!) for a clearer picture.

(e) How does this promise help you to live in a world where many days the evidence that Jesus is reigning on His throne and in the hearts of His people seems to be lacking?

(f) I told you in Day 1 I would include Furtado's headings for each of the 5 books: Book I (1-41)—Messianic Kingship Inaugurated and Confirmed (i.e. in David); Book II (42-72)—Messianic Kingship Transferred (i.e. from Solomon to David); Book III (73-89)—Messianic Kingship Aborted?; Book IV (90-106)—Live with Faith; Book V (107-150) Live with Obedience. Books IV & V fall under the heading: How to Live in the Absence of the Messianic King.

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The Message of the Book of Psalms