

## LIVING FAITH CHAPEL

### How To Read the Psalms: Origin, Development, and Use of the Psalms

#### Origin

- One hint concerning origin of psalm writing comes from the titles. Titles give information about the author, the historical occasion which prompted the writing, the melody, the psalm's function and, occasionally other matters.
- Authors
  - Besides David, there are the sons of Korah, sons of Asaph, Solomon, and Moses
  - Those psalms without authorship titles are called "orphan" psalms.
- Historical occasion (e.g. Ps. 3)
  - Historical titles at the beginning of a psalm pinpoint the event which inspired its writing
  - They are important because they provide a glimpse into the circumstances related to the Psalm.

#### Development

- The Psalms came into being over the whole period of time in which the OT was written.
- It covers over a span of 1000 years. There are songs written by Moses and songs that are post-exilic (e.g. Ps. 90, 126:1-2).
- It was an open, living book during the Old Testament time (cf. Ps. 72:20).
- No overall structure can be discerned, but we can recognize important groupings and movements within the book of Psalms.

#### *Groupings*

- Grouped into 5 books (Ps. 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150)
  - The 5 books were intentionally created to parallel the 5 books of Moses
  - Each of the 5 books ends with a doxology (e.g. Ps. 41:13)
- Grouped by author (cf. Ps. 72:20)
- Grouped by ascents (Ps. 120-134)
  - Ascents refer to songs that pilgrims sang as they ascended the Jerusalem and the temple

#### *Movements*

- As we move toward the end of the Psalms, praise overtakes lament, until at the very end of the book we have a virtual fireworks of praise.
- In a real sense, the book of Psalms moves us from mourning to joy (Ps. 126:5)
- The first psalm also seems relevant to the whole structure. It is a wisdom psalm. Psalm 1 deliberately places an important question before us by drawing two portraits in our minds: the portrait of the wicked man and portrait of the wise man. The question then is posed: Which are we? As we enter the sanctuary of the Psalms to worship and petition the Lord, which side are we on?

#### How were the Psalms used?

The Psalms were used in the public and private worship of devout Israelites.

Public: 1 Chronicles 16:4,7; Ps. 92; 115-118; 120-134

Private: Hannah's Prayer (1 Sam. 2:8) and Ps. 113:7-9