

CPC Adult Sunday Studies, Spring 2016
Bible Interpretation

The Psalms: Jesus' Prayer Book and the Prayer Book of the Church

1. Basic Definitions:

1. Generally there are psalms of lament (which are towards the start of the book) and psalms of praise - although further classifications exist
2. More lament psalms than any other! Note how this changes our stereotype of the superficially happy Christians - have you ever been truly honest with God? You should feel free to!
 1. Laments structure: from plea to praise, with a radical shift in the middle from deep darkness to radiant light
3. Most often the author is David, but not always. Sometimes it is meant for a corporate worship service in the Temple, other times it's simply an individual's prayer. It's important, as far as we can, to note the context when reading
4. 41% of all direct quotes of OT in the NT (116/238) are from Psalms!! Jesus himself alludes to them more than 50 times

2. Nature of the Covenants, esp. what defines "blessing", which differs sharply from what the New Covenant blessings are

1. **Davidic covenant** was temporal and political, and so the enemies of God were political and flesh-and-blood, whereas now our enemies are spiritual (Eph. 6.10ff).
 1. If the Psalmist is calling down punishment and curses, we must understand them all thru Christ:
 1. They're either curses that **we deserve** that Christ took on, or curses that our **spiritual enemies deserve**, even as no person is theoretically too far apart from God to be saved. We should still be just as angry at sin and evil, just in the right context. For a similar reason, Christians don't engage in holy war, although we do fight spiritual warfare, which is actually more serious.

2. The Promised Land in the New Testament – OT conceals what NT reveals

1. Land is revealed to mean something more in four main ways:
 1. **Spiritually** – to refer to Christ's person himself
 2. **Transcendentally** – to refer to the heavenly Jerusalem
 3. **Eschatologically** – to refer to the New Jerusalem at the Second Coming – from inheritance of land to inheritance of eternal reward
 4. **Typologically** (OT pointing to Christ) – 1. Slavery in Egypt and redeemed thru Red Sea = slavery of sin and redeemed by cross; 2. Delivered by Passover Lamb and wind at Red Sea = Christ our Lamb and the Spirit appearing as a wind (Ac. 2, 2Cor. 3.17); 3. Israel's baptism with Moses in the sea = church's baptism in Christ thru water; 4. Israel feeds on manna and drinks from a rock = Church feeds on Christ; 5. Tested in wilderness before inheriting Land = church's test now until eternal inheritance; 6. Israel finds physical rest, but incomplete = church finds rest in Christ

3. **David as a Type of Christ - read Ac. 2.25-35 (plus Rom. 1.3, Hebrews 1 and its quotations, and all over the Gospels!) – Christ is inaugurating David’s kingdom that did not complete it’s mission.**
 1. In Acts 2, who does the Psalm *actually* refer to according to Peter?
 2. Psalms are a portrait of the life of Christ

4. **Reading the Psalms through Christ**, considering the unity of the *Head* of Christ with the *Body* of Christ, try reading them as our prayers as well as **prayers of Christ**, the Son of David (the author of most the Psalms), on our behalf – either in a way:
 1. that we could not honestly say them without Christ making us righteous (Ps. 5)
 2. that Christ cries out to God on our behalf to be with us and forgive us (Ps. 13)
 3. that Christ identifies with us and our sins, as on the cross (Ps. 22)

5. **Reading the Psalms, ask 3 main questions:**
 1. How was this used in the original, Old Covenant context?
 2. How does this relate to Jesus?
 3. How does this relate to a Christian, who is “in Christ”, and the Church?

Examples:

1. **Psalm 91**
 1. Understood in the Old Covenant Context
 2. Applies to Jesus how?
 3. Understood in the New Covenant Context - how ought a Christian read this?
 1. How could a “prosperity gospel” preacher misunderstand this?

2. **Psalm 22**
 1. Obviously applies to Jesus. How would you explain to someone why Jesus is legitimately quoting this on the cross?
 2. How ought a Christian meditate on and pray this?

3. **Psalm 13**
 1. In what sense can a Christian pray this? In what sense do we have *better* hope than the psalmist?

4. **Psalm 44**
 1. Christians are in a better place than those who prayed this psalm!
 1. Find a clue in Rom. 8:36

5. **Psalm 69 (see vv. 22-29)**
 1. Curses upon the wicked - does a Christian still pray this? Who are the wicked?
 2. Note John 2.17