

8. In the Psalms: Part 1 (2Q 2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols)

Biblical material: Heb. 9:11–15, Psalm 122, Psalm 15, Psalm 24, Exod. 33:18–23, Psalm 5, Ps. 51:7–15, Revelation 14:1.

Quotes

- The prophets and the writers of the Psalms were clear that God was continuing to work in the universe and in all history. *Kenneth Scott Latourette*
- It can be difficult when only looking at the poetry of the Psalms to see where it is talking about Jesus' life and death, and how He fulfilled the promises God made to Adam and to Abraham... Not every Psalm is prophetic. The Messianic Psalms are scattered throughout the book. *Bethany Verrett*
- The key thing, to me... is the accuracy of Jewish events occurring since 1900 by chapter. So, 1901 relates to the first chapter of Psalms; 1902 relates to the second chapter; and so forth. *Mike Wigton*
- Psalms can be many things: prayerful, cathartic, poetic, emotional... It is also very likely that some were part of worship and royal ceremonies as well. But there is one thing they definitely are NOT: prophecies! *Based Pagan*
- Why do Jews not accept Jesus as the Messiah? Judaism does not believe that Jesus was the Messiah because he did not fulfill any messianic prophecies . . . *Dennis Prager*
- Psalms are prophecies of Jesus, allowing you to press deeper into the gospel. Jesus is speaking to you in the Psalms. Look for him in them. *Ryan Ross*.

Questions

How does a study of Psalms help with interpreting Bible prophecy? What would you say are the major themes in the Psalms? While there are no major prophetic discourses, what aspects do point forward to Jesus? Recognizing the prophecy has more to do with God communicating to us rather than predicting the future, what do we hear God saying in the Psalms?

Bible summary

Hebrews 9:11–15 speaks of Jesus our high priest going into the heavenly sanctuary. Psalm 122 is “A song for pilgrims going up to Jerusalem.” Those who do what is right can enter God’s sanctuary (see Psalm 15, similarly Psalm 24). In Exodus 33:18–23 God responds to Moses’ request to see him. Psalm 5 is David’s plea for help. Ps. 51:7–15 is David prayer of contrition, asking God to create a pure mind in him. In Revelation 14:1 the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with the 144,000.

Comment

The Psalms are not normally considered prophetic books. They do contain some elements that find fulfillment later, such as Jesus’ quote from Psalm 22 (and also two more statements from the same Psalm), and a comment from Psalm 110 that Jesus applies to himself. The last words of Jesus from the cross are from Psalm 31. Peter and Paul quoted from Psalm 16 that Jesus would not see corruption. John quoted from Psalm 69 that Jesus would be hated without cause. But if you want more direct connections, other Biblical books provide more examples, such as Matthew.

However, Jesus himself tells the disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, had to be fulfilled.” Luke 24:44. Jesus himself includes Psalms as being fulfilled in him. So we need to look a little deeper than exact equivalences between a prophetic statement and its direct fulfillment. There is an underlying theme. For example:

Messiah would be praised by babies (Psalm 8). He would delight to do God’s will (Psalm 40). He will inherit an eternal throne (Psalm 45). He would pray for his enemies (Psalm 109) and so on.

While there are specific references, there are more that could be termed “generic.” But they are still equally applicable to Jesus, even though many of Jesus’ time would not have seen them.

The more important aspect is the broader picture. Many statements in the Psalms that do not specifically refer to the future or to the Messiah can be read in the context of Jesus’ life. Even when the psalmists are speaking about their own experiences, Jesus in his humanity would identify with them, as we all do. Certainly Jesus saw in the Psalms allusions to himself. For example when he asked the Pharisees whose son the Messiah was, and they replied, “the son of David,” Jesus pointed to Psalm 110 to refer to his existence before David.

But the thrust of the Psalms is not to provide chapter and verse for prophetic promise and fulfillment. They are there to give all believers confidence in God’s plan of salvation in the context of the great controversy. Most of all they illustrate the character of God, even though we see this through the lens of flawed humanity.

David is a good example of someone who though far from perfect at least knew where to go to find forgiveness and healing. His many psalms reveal his deep-seated awareness of God in his life, and that his failures came from wandering away from his divine Friend. His rapturous songs of joy come from his very personal experience of God, and illustrate our own reactions when we realize all that God has done for each of us. His confessions are also significant (Ps. 32 and 51, for example)—for we cannot gain healing without accepting our need, our desperate condition that will lead to death. In worship, the honest recognition of our sinfulness, specifically stated, is essential as we come to God to find grace and help in time of need. Accepting God’s gift of spiritual healing is a wonderful sense of liberation!

Yet all this is way beyond ourselves. The whole universe is praising God. Why? Not just for his power and majesty, but *because of the way he uses it!* God needs no praise for being God. We praise him because he has chosen to think always of the other, to give himself without restriction to all of his created beings. In our case, to come among us, suffer at our hands, and be killed—and then rise again, demonstrating in his life and death the kind of person he truly is

Ellen White Comments

After his [Jesus’] resurrection he said to them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me...”The Bible now seemed a new book to the disciples, containing definite instruction. They saw that the events which had taken place in the suffering and death of their beloved Master were a fulfillment of prophecy. {RH September 18, 1900}

The story of a crucified and risen Saviour is the great central theme of the Word of God. In the Psalms, in the prophecies, in the gospels, and in the epistles, God has by revelation made prominent the vital truths concerning the agreement between the Father and the Son in providing for the salvation of a lost race. {RH September 24, 1908, par. 1 }

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. {PP 68}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God ... When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890}

But he whose eyes have been opened to see the love of Christ, will behold the character of God as full of love and compassion. God will not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son... All despair is swept from the soul when Christ is seen in his true character.” {RH February 3, 1891. Prepared October 8, 2024 © Jonathan Gallagher 2024}